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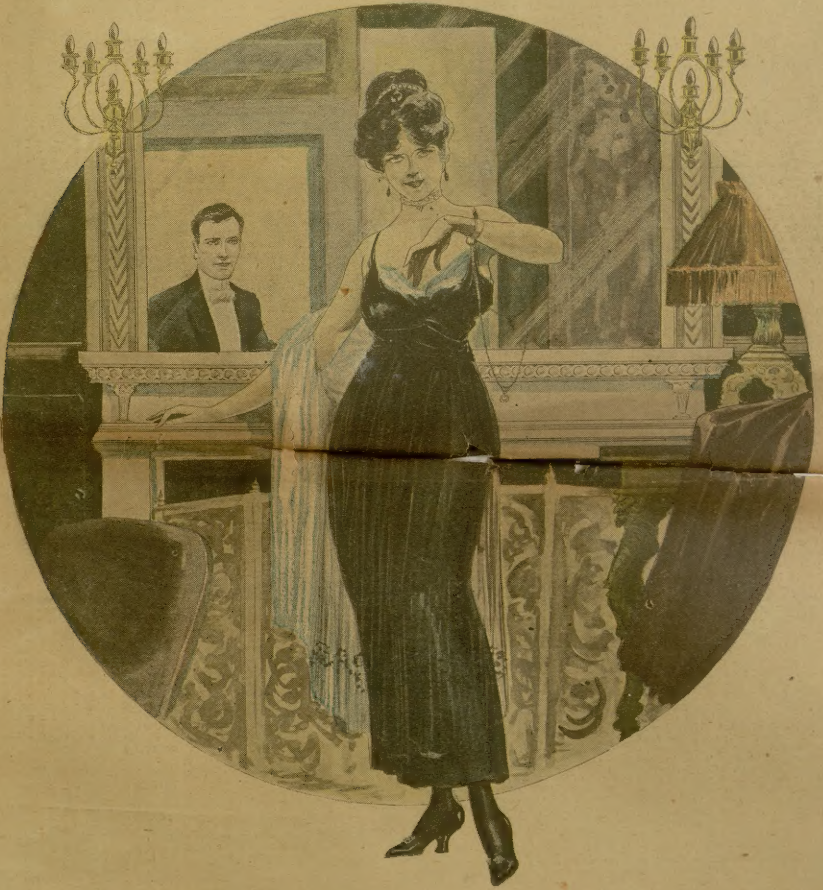

The Castle of Lies

A Chronicle of Perils

By Arthur H. Vesey

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MY FEET touched the narrow ledge. I was safe. But Willoughby? Brave Willoughby? I tried to call him. No sound came from my lips. I was too exhausted. The last atom of strength was spent. For the moment I was paralyzed—body and mind. I could only lean helpless against the mountainside, gasping for breath. And almost immediately Willoughby's voice came, quite cheerfully, quite steadily:

"All right. Bully for you. Look out, here's the rope. Now if I have decent luck. Be ready to bear a hand."

Again I tried to cry out, to warn him. If he would wait five minutes, three minutes, one minute, I might be myself again. Still no sound came from my frozen lips.

The rope fluttered over the overhang. It struck the icy ledge of the jutting rock to which I clung. Then slowly it fell over until it swayed loosely in the wind, still suspended from my body.

I did not attempt to draw it in. I was too exhausted for an exertion so slight as that. It swayed gently to and fro, and it seemed to me that presently an unseen force would grasp it and pull me headlong to destruction to the glacier below. In the meantime Willoughby was started.

Now I dared not cry out. I could only look up and wait, still struggling fiercely for my breath. But if I had been too exhausted to warn him, to unfasten that rope from my waist, how was I to give him the assistance he would surely need presently?

A stone fell, and then another, as he fought for a foothold. I could hear him breathing deeply, tho as yet I could not see him. I stood rigid, looking upward, a prey to such fears, to such terrors as no man can imagine.

Now he came slowly into sight, his feet feeling with infinite caution. The difficulties of the descent were appalling. Even for me, supported by the rope held by Willoughby from above, they had been all but impossible. Willoughby was no amateur; but without assistance—no, I could not hope to save him. It must be death for us both. But, and this was the agonizing thought, when the crisis came, would the awful stimulus release my imprisoned will? Or would horror still hold me?

And still he came. I could almost touch him now. He was actually near me—and then, what I had feared, what I had known must happen, did happen. His feet lost their foothold. He was hanging by his arms over the ragged, blue-green glacier that yawned to receive him a thousand feet below.

A moment he struggled frantically. Then he hung absolutely still.

"Can you reach me?" he panted. "Brace yourself and reach me if you can. But be quick."

I did not move. I was not afraid to die with him, tho the world has refused to believe me. I did not move because I could not. Horror for the moment bereft me of my very reason to think and act. My will was frozen. My brain was numb.

Then the nightmare passed. Suddenly I was quite calm. I took in a deep breath. I braced myself against the grim cliff for the shock as he should fall into my outstretched arms.

But at that instant Willoughby quietly loosened his hold—even while I gathered all my poor strength for that [illegible] he [illegible] one word, without passion, without despair:

"Coward!"

His body brushed my own as it fell. I heard it strike brutally the glacier below. Then there was stillness.

He was dead, and I lived.

The stillness was awful—and a solitude still more awful—vast, savage, and frozen, and always the whiteness of the eternal snows. And then darkness came.

Hours later guides found me still lying there. I saw them scrambling toward me. I gazed at them stupidly, indifferently. When they called I did not answer. They bore me back to the Alpine village we had left the day before. There were black nights of delirium. And in my delirium I cried:

"I might have saved him. I am a murderer. He died cursing me as a coward."

And so they judged me. When I was convalescent and crawled into the sunshine again, it was too late to make excuses even if I wished. People had already passed sentence.

No one spoke to me. I was looked at askance. If any pitied, it was a pity tempered with scorn. More than once a kodak was snapped in my face. I was a curiosity. I was a coward.

CHAPTER II.

TO RETURN to America, to work; to forget if possible—that was the feverish impulse that dominated me now. And yet I lingered a week at Grindelwald. It was Quixotic, perhaps, but at least I refused to run away.

It was not a pleasant week. If I walked up the village street the guides, loafing about at the corners, nudged each other and indulged in brutal jests at my expense. In their stupid if honest eyes I had committed the unpardonable sin. I had failed a fellow-climber at a moment of peril. They delighted to buttonhole the tourist—to make me still more notorious by reciting to them the story of my disgrace. I was completely ostracized. No one took the trouble of asking if the blame were wholly my own. I was labeled the coward. That was the end of it.

But when I had lived thru the interminable seven days, each marked with an insult, I packed my things, vaguely hopeful after all. I was going home. I was going to America, and America is a long distance from Grindelwald. It was unlikely, I tried to persuade myself, that the story and the kodaks would follow me there. But if so, at least my fellow-townsmen would give me the benefit of the doubt. For once there had been a fire and a panic in the theater, and I had been lucky enough to help a little. So, if the story reached them, they would listen before they condemned.

When my luggage was placed on the roof of the omnibus, and I was already seated inside, the proprietor of the hotel, who had hitherto held himself discreetly aloof, deigned to wish me good-by.

"Adieu, Mr. Haddon. It will not give you pleasure to remember my hotel, I am afraid," he said with a mournful diffidence."

"That would be too much to expect," I anewered, cynically amused at his embarrassment.

He hesitated a moment, one foot on the steps of the omnibus.

"Mr. Haddon, may I say that I have sympathy for you. Do not let the little accidents spoil your life. None of us are always brave. And certainly there is a courage of the spirit as well as of the body. The world condemns hastily, but it will doubt its verdict if you refuse to accept it. And you go now?"

"To America," I replied grimly, "where at present there is no verdict."

"But not at once?"

"Why not?" I asked in surprise.

"It is your affair of course, monsieur, but at least"—he was seeking a pretentious expression of sympathy, but he ended lamely—"but at least do not let this simple affair spoil your digestion."

"Perhaps I shall linger a day or two at Lucerne," I said good-naturedly.

"Ah, yes," he nodded in approval, "monsieur will retreat slowly."

And so I came to Lucerne instead of sailing immediately to America as I had intended. It was not exactly bravado that sent me there to meet the scorn and sneers of those who may have heard of my disgrace. It was the sympathy of the little innkeeper.

When I arrived, Lucerne was en fete. The Schweizerhof was crowded. But in the restaurant I [illegible] hope that I might not be. In the writing-room, however, a London weekly advertised to the world the story of my disgrace; and one of those cursed kodaks adorned the first page. It was only a question of hours before I should be known. I walked out on the terrace for coffee, profoundly discouraged.

The terrace, screened by bay-trees and cedars from the broad road that ran along the lake, swarmed with the people who came to Switzerland, not to see but to be seen. They were chattering in every tongue in Europe. I stood in full view of everyone until a waiter beckoned me; for there were few tables unoccupied.

From the railway station to the Hotel Nationale the quay was ablaze with the flare of multicolored lights. Placed in screenlike receptacles at intervals against the facades of the great hotels, the white monotony of outline was transformed into a fairy fabric of blue and green and red. The black masses of the people at the windows and balconies, eager to see the procession of the lake, were thrown into garish relief. Beneath the double rows of chestnut trees flowed a boisterous stream of Swiss peasants, arm in arm, shouting and singing as they marched, and a more sedate crowd of townsfolk and curious tourists.

The lake was a conventional scene of gaudy brilliancy. A procession of floats was passing as I took my seat, each float distinctive of some incident of Swiss life or of Swiss history and glory.

I looked out on this stereotyped scene of gayety with a resolute show of interest. I was determined not to let the incident of the photograph ruin my digestion, as the little innkeeper had said. Perhaps it was my morbid fancy, but already I thought people were regarding me curiously. And then I was sure I heard my name spoken by a woman. I refused to look around. I smoked my cigar deliberately, looking out toward the lake.

Suddenly from the Rigi Mountain, far off on the left, a dot of light pierced the black gloom. Another and another quivered, until there was a double row of them burning some distance down the mountainside. Then on the right, on austere giant Pilatus, its shaggy head crowned with stars, other lights blazed. And then, very far off, up in the silence of the snows, one solitary beacon light shone like a star, steadily and alone. This little light comforted me, tho it glowed from the very region of the tragedy. I liked to think it an emblem of hope. Out of the gloom and despair it burned steadily. It gave me a sort of courage.

My elbow was jogged, and not with deference.

"Pardon, but this seat is reserved."

It was a waiter who spoke, and he was insolent. But I answered quietly:

"I was given this place by another waiter. There was no placard on the table nor were the chairs turned up. Why do you say it is reserved?"

As I asked this question I glanced over my shoulder to see for whom the man was demanding my place.

On the steps leading to the terrace from the dining-room stood two ladies. One of them was a handsome, distinguished woman well passed middle age, and saying that of her, one has said everything.

Of the other, one might say everything, and yet feel that one had said nothing. It was not the air of proud distinction that arrested my gaze, for she shared that quality with the other. It was not that she was merely young and beautiful. Other women are young and beautiful. It was rather that there breathed from the quiet presence of this woman a noble serenity and calm that is adorable as it is rare. The assured direct look of her eyes was truth itself. She had not seen me. She looked beyond the lake—at the solitary little beacon light that had comforted me only a moment ago.

I gave up my seat at once, of course. I walked slowly to the end of the terrace, and took a less desirable place.

I refused to allow myself to be interested in these people. And yet I was strangely interested in them. It was as if I were waiting. When my elbow was again touched, I felt no surprise. It was the waiter who had spoken to me a moment before.

"Pardon—the ladies who took your seat——"

I turned abruptly.

The younger of the two women had risen. She stood at the table, leaning forward slightly, [illegible] expression at once startled and [illegible]. To my aston[illegible] was smiling at me radiantly, a smile of charming surprise and welcome. But as I stared at her stupidly, the smile was succeeded by an expression of dismay. She addressed the elder woman in an agitated whisper. Her lips were parted in sheer wonder.

Wonder held me spellbound as well as they. I turned vaguely to the waiter. He had already left my side, summoned imperiously, no doubt, by the ladies who had certainly mistaken me for another.

I had half risen. Now I seated myself again, and every nerve tingled with excitement. The adventure was not yet ended; I was sure of it. And I welcomed the diversion, even tho pain and humiliation were to be its price. I had to come to Lucerne on a momentary impulse, so I thought. What if fate had guided that impulse?

For the third time the waiter spoke to me. I looked up at him calmly: I had known he would come.

"The ladies wish to speak to monsieur, if monsieur is at liberty."

The summons had come, as I knew that it would. I drew in a deep breath. My heart was beating fast,. tho outwardly I was calm enough. I turned; I advanced toward them.

CHAPTER III.

I SCANNED each face intently as I approached them. There was a high, delicate color on the cheeks of the elder woman. She was frowning slightly. I could not be sure whether curiosity or annoyance was the dominant note of her bearing. But presently I saw that it was rather resentment and thinly veiled contempt. During the past week scorn and contempt had flashed from too many eyes that I should misinterpret that look. They knew, then, the story of my disgrace. That fact would explain the expression of contempt; but why this strange resentment, this indignation?

The younger woman, the daughter, for the likeness was unmistakable, sat motionless as I approached. The attitude was significant of a feeling more hostile and deeper than that which agitated the mother.

It was the mother who spoke, not without evident reluctance:

"Is it true that you are Mr. Haddon—Mr. Ernest Haddon?"

"It is true," I replied quietly.

"Then you were with Mr. Lawrence Willoughby when the tragedy occurred?" she continued in a deep, even voice.

"Yes, madam."

"I am Mrs. Brett. This is my daughter, Miss Brett."

Again I bowed gravely. The girl made a slight inclination, but her eyes still gazed intently at the little beacon light that still burned on the mountain.

I heard the name at first with an idle curiosity. Then vaguely I repeated it to myself. I had heard it before. It awoke memories. I vainly tried to place these people who were compelling themselves to speak to me with so evident reluctance and hesitation.

"I am sure I have heard, only lately——"

"Perhaps," assented Mrs. Brett bitterly, "it was Mr. Willoughby himself——."

"Mother!" The daughter touched the mother's arm appealingly.

"Yes," I said in a low voice, "I remember now."

"Then, sir," and the question rose to a crescendo of restrained feeling, "when we were informed only a moment ago that you were Mr. Haddon, you will understand why we have sent for you?"

"Yes, madam, I understand. You wish to hear from my lips—the lips of the survivor—of the tragedy?"

Willoughby had loved the daughter When death had faced us together, he had spoken of her. At such a time one opens one's heart, even to a stranger. And he had told me of his heart's desire; he had told me of his despair that she had not returned his love. At least not openly. But now, when it was too late, perhaps she realized that she had loved him after all. If that were so, with what abhorrence must she regard me. And if I were to tell her everything—that he had died reproaching me for cowardice— Yes, pain and humiliation were indeed to be the price of this meeting.

Yet outwardly I maintained a stoic calm. I knew there must be no excuses for myself. Whether this woman had loved him or not, at least his memory must be sacred to her. The man who was dead had paid the [illegible] penalty of presumption and folly. But that must not be hinted at; it was my weakness and cowardice that I must emphasize.

"Helena," Mrs. Brett turned to her daughter, "would you prefer that Mr. Haddon speak to you alone?"

"Yes, mother, I should prefer that."

"I shall wait for you, Helena, in the writing-room. Good evening, Mr. Haddon."

As she left me I again caught the look of wonder, a resentful wonder, a curiosity that was even harsh and stern.

I seated myself opposite the woman I had unconsciously wronged. For the first time she looked at me, and I saw with relief that neither pain nor anguish lurked in her clear eyes. There was no outraged love nor tenderness. Nor was there pity for herself or for me. But even so, it seemed to me pathetic that a woman should be so strong.

"I wish to hear everything. Begin, please, with your first meeting with Mr. Willoughby Tell me all—to the last moment."

"I shall not spare either yourself or myself," I promised.

CHAPTER IV.

DID you know Mr. Willoughby intimately? Were you at Oxford with him? I think I do not remember his speaking of you."

She spoke slowly, with a certain aloofness. A desire to be just struggled with a manifest dislike—a dislike that was evidently not lessened because of my studied calm. Perhaps she thought a fervent expression of penitence more fitting. But instinctively I knew that an hysterical repentance would increase her contempt for me. I preferred her hatred to that. And so I told my story absolutely without feeling.

"I met him for the first time the night before his death."

"Indeed!" Her voice trembled with anger, despite her extraordinary self-control. She was indignant that he should have discussed his love with an utter stranger.

"It was not until we had both given up hope that he mentioned you, Miss Brett," I said with some sternness.

"But surely his death was the result of a quite unexpected accident? The newspapers gave one that impression," she exclaimed suspiciously. The words and the look accused me of falsehood.

"The accident came only after we were both utterly exhausted by the sufferings of a night spent on the mountain-paths."

"And were the newspapers correct in saying that you were not an experienced mountain climber? And did Mr. Willoughby know that?"

"Yes, I am simply a tourist. This is the first time I have been in Europe. I came to Switzerland as thousands of others come—to see the mountains from an hotel piazza or a railway train. To me, as to most tourists, the Alps were simply a gigantic panorama to be viewed complacently, as one looks at Niagara Falls. To climb them never occurred to me until I met Mr. Willoughby.

"I was making the usual circular tour, Interlaken, Scheidegg, Lauterbrunnen, Grindelwald. Mr. Willoughby happened to sit next to me at the table d'hote at the Bear Hotel. He was an athlete; Switzerland to him was simply an immense playground; he spoke of the trophies he had won at Queen's Fields in the same breath as his exploits in scaling a mountain-top. At first I listened to him with indifference; his enthusiasm amused me—nothing more. I had supposed that people climbed mountains simply for the view; because on the summit one could see a little farther than if one were merely on the mountainside. But as he talked I began to understand. It was a game—a conflict—a battle if you wish—in which one pitted one's strength and wit in a hand-to-hand fight with nature.

"Gradually his enthusiasm aroused mine. I was wearied of sight-seeing; the horde of tourists disgusted me. Before we had finished our cigars I longed to pluck my first edelweiss; to play this new game myself. I hinted vaguely at dangers, but my companion laughed at them. I was presumptuous enough to think that where he led I might follow."

"The usual mistake of the tourist, I believe," commented Miss Brett, coldly. "And you begged that you might go with him on his next climb?"

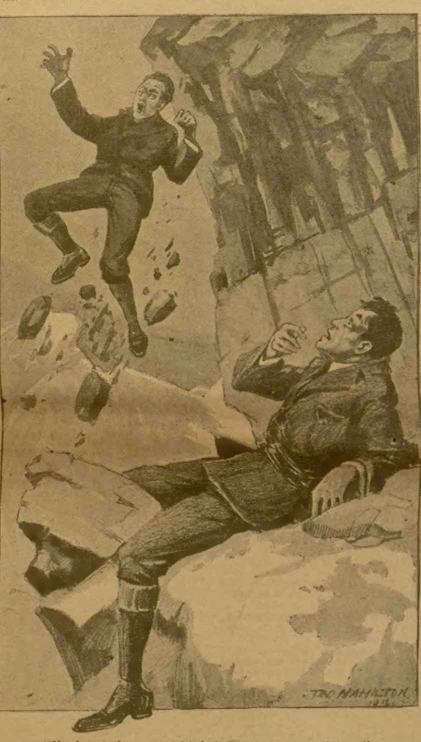
"At least I was willing enough to do so when he suggested that. He was planning to make the Stralegg Pass. I confess that the word 'pass' did not sound especially formidable, for he declared that guides were not at all necessary. So I agreed to make the ascent with him. I did not realize that mountain climbing, more than any other sport, requires arduous training.

"The next morning at eleven o'clock we started from Grindelwald. We were provided with the customary paraphernalia of the Alpine climber; but our climb to the Schwarzegg Club Hut, at the Upper Ice-fall, where we were to spend the night, might have been made with walking-sticks instead of alpenstocks. It was for the most part a simple path over glassy slopes on the eastern side of the Lower Grindelwald Glacier—a bypath winding along the cliffs.

"We were aroused next morning before it was light, and I was rather relieved when two guides, who were waiting at the hut for a party expected that day, shook their heads at the weather, and warned us that it would not be safe to attempt the Pass alone. My companion laughed at their fears. The heavens were quite clear; the stars shone faintly; the moon was waning; there was no hint of wind or storm. He assured me that the protests of the guides were a clumsy attempt to frighten us into engaging their services. They were waiting for us; it was the usual trick. I accepted his explanation as plausible enough. I was unwilling to disappoint him now that we had started; but for the first time I felt some misgiving.

"I shall not weary you with the description of our climb. The ascent was steep and trying in places, over ice and rock. In about four hours we reached the Zasenberg Chalets and the Central Ice-fall. A stiff scramble of an hour brought us to the frozen snow of a plateau. Here our path seemed to me less clear, but my companion advanced with confidence. I felt the altitude now distressingly; I had qualms of mountain sickness. Still I struggled after him, until we came to the base of a precipitous wall of ice. We had passed over the last of the glaciers; we had reached the summit.

"I supposed now that the worst was over. But the descent was by far the most difficult and dangerous part of our day's work. Every step had to be taken with extreme care. We were roped, of course; and I annoyed Mr. Willoughby by being compelled to halt repeatedly. The fact is, I was frightfully exhausted, tho I struggled after him as doggedly as I could.



"He hung there one frightful instant, and then—"

"At last the descent became less hazardous. I believe that we should have arrived at Grimsel safely had we continued our way in a direct line and with the care that had characterized our first movements. But my companion attempted more and more difficult feats of climbing. As a rule I did not follow him. But presently a mountain ledge obstructed our path. Two courses were open to us; we could make a long but safe detour around it, or we could scale it. My companion decided upon the latter course. I again fastened the rope about my waist and followed him."

"Do you wish me to infer that the boyish confidence of Mr. Willoughby led to the tragedy?" Helena asked in a passionless voice.

"I wish you to infer nothing."

"But you place the blame, at least tacitly, on one who is dead and cannot defend himself," she insisted angrily.

"I am sorry you should think so. I am trying to give you the facts quite simply—the absolute truth."

"I do not wish to wrong you," she said in a low voice. "I wish to be just to you, Mr. Haddon."

"Just when I realized that we were in danger I hardly know. Or perhaps I should be more honest if I said that I cannot tell just when I began to feel afraid. We had climbed cautiously and slowly around the ledge. Mr. Willoughby was in the lead. Suddenly, as we rounded this shoulder, a flake of snow touched my cheek.

"Clinging to the face of the rock, I looked down. The ice slopes were turning yellow in the cold early evening light. But far below they were hidden by mists, which even as we looked seemed to gather volume and to roll onward and upward, threatening to engulf us. The sky was leaden. As we made the ledge a gust of wind almost swept us from our foothold. The snow fell more thickly; it came, it seemed, from every quarter in an instant.

"We had made the ledge in safety, but even as we looked about us the mist enveloped us. It was impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. Still we struggled on slowly and mechanically. Rocks, which in ordinary circumstances would have seemed quite easy, suddenly appalled us; for we were unable to see where to put hand or foot.

"Even to my inexperienced eyes we were in a terrible predicament. Willoughby, however, was cheerful and confident. If he had misgivings he kept them to himself. I followed him blindly.

"Suddenly to our complete dismay the descent was cut off by a precipice, the rocks on either side falling almost sheer to the glacier beneath. Further attempt was useless that night. Even Willoughby acknowledged that. There was nothing for it but to bivouac for the night, and trust for better luck on the morrow.

"It is impossible for me to describe for you the sufferings of that terrible night. We gathered such stones as we could find on the narrow mountain ledge, and placed them as a protection against the biting wind. We consumed the last morsel of food. We had already drunk our tea. We huddled close to each other for warmth. We shivered, not for moments, but for fifteen minutes at a time. Every now and then we chafed each other's hands to prevent their being frost-bitten. But the greatest suffering was caused by our efforts to fight off the deadly numbness and drowsiness."

"Did you give up all hope then?" asked Helena, shuddering.

"I am sure that Willoughby did not. His courage and heroism were unfailing. Until the cold had exhausted us we attempted to while away the hours by relating to each other incidents of our past life. It was natural that our talk should become increasingly intimate. Death stared us in the face. At such an hour as that one forgets that one is speaking to a stranger. It was then that Mr. Willoughby told me of you."

"I understand," said Helena in a voice that was strangely gentle. For the first time there were tears in her eyes.

"At half-past two the snow ceased falling. The sky cleared. The stars shown out one by one in a blackened sky. It was now, I think, for the first time I felt our utter helplessness. The terror of the mountains, the awful loneliness, the stillness, the sense of utter isolation—all overwhelmed me. The ghostly whiteness of the mountain peaks shone out against the dark sky. The moon shed an unearthly radiance over all. Shadowy and unreal, a phantom host, mountain after mountain stretched as far as one could see. And our helplessness was made the more pitiable because at our feet we could see the lights of the village.

"The sun rose at last. But I was terribly exhausted with the cold, the night's vigil, and fatigue. Three times we attempted to resume our descent, and three times my exhaustion paralyzed every effort. I wish to make no excuses, and yet——"

I paused. I looked at her wistfully. I saw no pity or sympathy in her eyes. She came from a race of soldiers. They, too, had suffered and died, and their honor had been stainless. Why should she make any allowance for my suffering and weaknessness. When all is said, weakness to her meant cowardice. She forgot, as the world had forgotten, that it is not so difficult to be brave when the danger is a familiar one. She looked at me quite unmoved.

"The rocks," I continued, "were covered with snow and were ice-glazed. Willoughby was anxious now. And yet it was impossible to linger; no one would dream of looking for us on this side of the mountain. So that presently when the sun rose higher and we were partially warm, I stumbled painfully and slowly after my companion.

"For a time I followed him mechanically in perfect silence. Suddenly he came to a pause. He told me very quietly that we were lost. He pointed as a proof of that to the overhanging ledge around which we had climbed the evening before. I am nearly at the end of my story, Miss Brett."

Again she shuddered, and we both looked at the little beacon light flickering very faintly now. About us the people laughed and talked; the orchestra was playing a Strauss waltz.

"Do not spare me, please," whispered Helena.

"To retrace our steps was impossible. Just around the mountainside we knew that we should find ourselves in comparative safety. But to climb down the overhanging precipice had been appallingly difficult the day before. Now, exhausted in mind and body, the rocks slippery with snow and ice, it seemed impossible—for me, at least. And yet it is I who am alive to tell you how desperate that chance was.

"Generous to the last, he insisted that I go first. The rope was fastened about my waist I climped down the overhanging cliff, supported by the rope held by my companion above.

"I reached the ledge. I was safe. But I had put forth the last of my strength. I could only stand there, fighting fiercely for my breath. Almost immediately Willoughby flung down the rope and warned me that he was coming, and that I should be ready to give him what assistance I could. I tried to speak—to implore him to delay the descent for a few moments; my voice seemed a mere whisper. Probably he did not hear me. Or he dared not delay lest he should lose his own nerve; for he must have known that the chances were wholly against him.

"Not even for you can I linger over the details of these last awful moments. He had almost accomplished the impossible. He was just above me. I could have reached up and clasped his body. And then what I had feared, what I had known would happen, did happen. His feet slipped. He was hanging by his arms. He called to me in a strong and steady voice to come to his aid. I did not. At least, until it was too late. He hung there one frightful instant, and then——"

Helena clasped her hands convulsively. "And so the end came," she murmured. "And he died without one word?"

I hesitated.

"It is my right to know." She looked

at me steadily with burning eyes. "Yes, he spoke one word—one——"

"And that was——?"

"'Coward!'" I whispered.

CHAPTER V.

A LONG silence fell between us. I looked where the little beacon light had flickered feebly a few moments before. It had gone out. With an effort, I sought the face of the girl who sat opposite to me.

She had judged. I knew that. She looked at me as if I were a being apart, of another world. By my own confession I had shut myself out of her world. The man who had loved her loyally had died as the strong people of her race had died. That proud fact supported her. For her I existed no longer. She gathered her skirts about her. She inclined her head slightly. She was going out of my life. She had uttered no spoken reproach. But her look, her every movement, echoed the verdict of the man who was dead.

I pushed back my chair. Thank Heaven, the ordeal was over; that was my first thought. Then I hesitated. Suddenly I longed to make this woman understand.

When others had pointed the finger of scorn I had refused to be crushed, because I believed their censure unjust. I had grown almost indifferent as to whether people despised me or not. But this was the first woman to whom I had spoken since the tragedy. Had she loved Willoughby, it would have been hopeless to expect any sympathy from her. She would have felt toward me a lifelong hatred.

But she did not love Willoughby. It was merely a sense of duty that had urged her to seek from me my story. Perhaps she wished to tell it to his bereaved parents. It was to be a sort of reparation owed to the memory of the man who had loved her.

She had judged me without emotion, without passion. She had spoken no words of reproach or anger. She was leaving me in silence. But I knew that the silence of this woman would haunt me as no spoken word of bitterness ever could. It was a silence that would irritate and madden with the coming years. It was hopeless to make her understand, to expect one word of sympathy. But at least she should speak, tho it were in anger. I leaned toward her; there was a certain pride in my humility.

"Like the others, you think I have forfeited the right to one word of sympathy."

"More than all the others, I should think," she answered calmly, without hesitation.

"Yes," I said wearily, "you have placed a placard on my back, as they used to put a high paper cap on the boys in school. On the cap the schoolmasters used to write the word 'Dunce'; on the placard you have written the word 'Coward.' And yet I am not quite a coward. Do you refuse to see that I am simply one of those men whose fate it has been to be tried to the utmost? Forgive me; I am appealing to your sympathy after all. You resent that. It is quite natural. It was a moment of weakness." Again I pushed back my chair.

She regarded me half curiously.

Perhaps she noticed I was haggard and pale. Perhaps, in spite of herself, she was a little sorry for me.

"Oh, I suppose," she said very gently, "that there is something to be said in the defense of every one. By and by I may feel less bitter toward you, Mr. Haddon. I shall remember that you did not spare yourself—that you might not have told me"—her voice fell to a whisper—"everything."

"Thank you for saying so much. If there were any reparation I would make it. You should know that."

"Reparation!" Her eyes flashed. "How can you speak of reparation?"

"And is there no atonement possible, even for the most wretched?"

She looked down at me almost sternly, for she had risen at the question. Then, as if a thin veil had been drawn from her face, I saw the gentle pity of womanhood reflected there. A strange sweetness came into her voice as she spoke slowly, almost unwillingly. It was a mystical message of comfort she was bringing to me. She was suggesting a way of hope after all.

"Because of you a life has been lost to the world. I leave out the personal loss to myself. Because of your weakness, to call it by the most charitable name, the world is the poorer for one strong soul."

"Yes," I said humbly, "yes."

"But if," she spoke more eagerly, "if thru you a life were saved for the world—if it were to be a life for a life——"

A moment I stared at her, uncomprehending. She had suggested a way of escape so romantic that to one living in this twentieth century it may seem absurd. But the very audacity of the suggestion appealed to me.

"Yes," I cried passionately, "I understand. It is to be a life for a life! In some way, no matter how, I am to save a life for the life that has been lost thru me."

"At least that should restore your self-respect," she assented almost coldly. She wished me to understand that whatever I might or might not do was no concern of hers. But I was not to be discouraged.

"And if I am so fortunate as to accomplish this"—I held her eyes steadily—"will you, I should say rather, will the world, remember that? Shall I then stand on the same plane as other men in your respect?"

"I vouch nothing for the world, and certainly not," she added haughtily, "for myself."

I felt an emotion that was very near that of triumph. It is extraordinary how in the most sacred of moments the passion to conquer, to subdue, obtrudes itself. Henceforth, whether this woman would have it or not, there was a bond between us. She had suggested a way of escape! I accepted it with passionate gratitude. I swore to myself, as I stood before her, that I would not rest until I had accomplished the sacred task she had set me. I answered with a boldness that surprised even myself:

"From this day my one object in life shall be to make the reparation you have suggested. But when that is done you will know it."

I saw her hand tremble as she lightly touched her hair. It was not so much embarrassment that brought the slow blush to her cheek as anger. She turned from me without a word. I watched her disappear with a strange exultation.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM dreaming to action is but a step. It is true that the divine madness too soon passes; the reaction comes; one is restored sharply to the normal poise by the rude awakening that comes with failure or with self-consciousness. But sometimes consequences are already set in motion, and it is too late to draw back; there is nothing for it but to be borne onward with the tide.

So it was with me. I might return to America—take up the threads of life where I had left them—laugh at the newspaper accounts of the tragedy—deny them, or at least live them down. If I did that, I should know exactly what would happen to me. I could count upon just how much happiness would come to my life, how much interest routine and duty would yield me.

But my imagination had been set aflame. A world of chivalry and romance beckoned to me alluringly. And if I trod the mazes of that fairy world, there would be none to ridicule, for there would be none to know that I had set out to find it. If it proved to be only a world of dreams and fantasy, I should at least have had the delicious excitement of seeking it, of playing make-believe—the most fascinating game, after all is said, for boy or man.

I had come to Europe secretly cherishing the hope that such an adventure would come to me as had happened tonight. The thirty-three years of my life had been passed in an atmosphere unusually dead and prosaic.

When I left the university, I had acted as secretary to an uncle, a multimillionaire who lived in an obscure town of the middle West. I had trudged the dreary and stupid circle of business routine, my eyes bent somberly to earth. Success had come, or what the world calls success—money and a measure of respect that is given to one with a substantial bank account. But that is not life.

And then one day I awoke. I realized with a start that life was slipping away from me; and with the hours the golden aspirations and delights that make life worth while. I was simply a machine, rather a cog in the huge machine of business. I rebelled. In one day I broke the shackles that bound me. I was free. My life was at last my very own. I could do with it what I pleased. I could go where I wished.

And so I had come to Europe. I had hugged to my breast the common but pathetic delusion that across the seas I should find something—just what I did not know—something that would make life more joyous, give to it charm and interest.

I had searched diligently for the magic talisman in strange cities, and of course I had not found it. The blue flower is not to be plucked so easily. Instead of happiness and diversion, disgrace and misery had come. Should I return home, then, imbittered, averting the eyes? Or should I avail myself of the way of escape which this woman had lightly suggested?

And if I chose to consider it a quest, a challenge, there was none, not even she, to forbid, tho she of all the people in the world would be the last to consider it such. And if fortune aided me, as it aids most adventurous souls, I would seek her out, tho I searched the wide world for her. And then, perhaps——

I crushed in my hand the program of music that lay on the table. Pshaw, it was the woman, then, that gave to this fantastic mission its vague thrill; not the idea of the mission itself! It was the woman whom I had wronged, and who hated me, that called. She sat in the lists; in her hands was the laurel wreath; for her I would endure the shock of battle.

I sat quietly, still staring out into the night. The lights of green and red and blue had burned away long ago. The lake, rocked in its cradle of shadowy mountains, stirred gently under the moon. The terrace was almost deserted, and still I lingered. Disillusionment must come too soon, and with the morrow inevitable depression.

Suddenly I became ill at ease. I turned slowly in my seat. I looked furtively about me. It was as if I had spoken a secret thought aloud, and one were listening, watching.

I was watched, and with a curious intentness that was almost savage. A woman was seated at the window of the writing-room. She held rigidly in both hands the English journal in which my photograph had appeared.

Our eyes met. I gazed at her standing perfectly still. It was not embarrassment or anger that held me, it was rather wonder. For on the face of this woman was the same intent, curious surprise that had astonished me so much earlier in the evening, when I first met Mrs. Brett and her daughter.

A measure of surprise is natural enough, when the original of a photograph unexpectedly appears before one. But I knew that this fact alone did not explain the strained look of the woman at the open window. Defiance (or was it sheer anxiety?) flashed from the burning depths of these eyes that held me fascinated.

She stirred. I saw her toss the paper lightly to the table. Then she disappeared.

I entered the hotel. I paused uncertainly in the hall, then walked swiftly into the reading-room. Apparently it was deserted.

I reached for the paper; I tore out the page in which my photograph appeared; I crushed it savagely in my hand.

There was a light, mocking laugh. I looked up, startled. It was the woman again.

She stood almost in a shadow. One hand was placed lightly on her breast, the other stretched its white length on the low mantel, and supported her.

There was something Oriental in her magnificent costume. The dress was black velvet. About her neck hung a narrow stole of Eastern embroidery, studded at intervals with turquoises. From the extended arm draped a scarf of shimmering gold thread. About the left arm, both at the wrist and above the elbow, were several bracelets of bizarre design. The corsage, too, flashed with gems as she breathed slowly and deeply. Her pose, as her costume, had something almost barbaric in its sensuous extravagance. The small head, exquisitely coiffured, was turned slightly, thrown back so that her white throat gleamed out of the shadow. The lips were parted, still smiling; and more sensuous, more brilliant, more devouring than the gleam of the jewels about her person, was the flame that burned in her eyes.

She laughed again. It was impossible not to know that she was challenging me. The pose, the look, the laugh—all were a challenge. But I was in no mind to accept it, and glanced idly at the papers on the table. Presently I walked toward the door. Again her light laughter pursued me.

"Pardon, monsieur," she called, still mockingly.

I turned and looked silently at my tormentor.

Mischievously she pointed a jeweled finger toward a placard on the wall.

"Guests are forbidden to carry away the papers from the reading-room," I read.

To assume a tragic mien at this delicious bit of badinage would have been absurd. I could not help laughing. But I answered with some pique:

"Hotel proprietors are forbidden to annoy guests with offensive photographs in the hotel reading-room! That is a new rule I shall have placed upon the walls tomorrow."

She clapped her hands delightedly. "A beautiful and much-needed rule," she murmured, her eyes sparkling. Then she came toward me a few steps, and stood, a dazzling and fascinating figure, in the full light. Her eyes no longer mocked; they beseeched.

"Forgive me. It was cruel to laugh. But when I catch you, like a naughty child—ah, that is too droll!"

"On the contrary, madam, I should thank you. It was my first laugh for weeks."

"Monsieur!" She came a step nearer, her dress gleaming and glittering as she moved. She looked at me pitifully.

But her sympathy was too easily awakened to be convincing. I understood perfectly that she had been determined to speak to me when I first entered the room.

"Madam," I said cynically, "it is you who are breaking a rule now—a rule of society."

"Par example?" she demanded, her eyes darkening.

"It is forbidden to show sympathy to one who has been unfortunate."

She sighed her relief. Evidently she had expected from me a banality to the effect that society does not sanction a woman's speaking to a strange man.

"But"—she made a gesture of contempt—"the canard of a newspaper! Who believes that?"

"All the world, apparently," I answered, amazed at the vigor of her denial.

"Well, I, for one, do not."

I regarded her, still cynical, and yet I was moved. Hers was the first sympathy shown to me. I felt instinctively that it was the cheap and insincere sympathy of an adventuress, who offered it for her ends. She would demand its price presently. And yet I was not ungrateful for her interest. As for the price—well, is anything quite gratuitous? Whether the payment be in gold or gratitude or love or obedience—we all have our price.

"And why do you not believe the account of this newspaper?"

"You are a race of warriors. One with such blood in one's veins does not play the coward. No!" She struck her hands together to emphasize her conviction.

"A race of warriors?" I repeated wonderingly.

"Has not every English gentleman the blood of warriors in his veins?" she protested.

"But I am an American," I said quietly.

"Impossible!" She looked at me, really bewildered now. "An American! But the ladies that you spoke to half an hour ago?"

"And can an American not speak to Englishwomen?" I demanded coldly. That she should mention them at all annoyed me.

"Then you are not"—she twisted a bracelet about her arm, then looked up swiftly—"you are not even a relation?"

"I am not even a friend," I said, still more coldly. "Good night, madam."

"Good night, monsieur."

She sank into an armchair, as one who is too astonished to make even the physical effort of standing. For the first time since she had spoken she was not acting. As I walked toward the door she stared after me, frowning in her perplexity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning, when I first awoke, I wondered vaguely why this day seemed to be so different from the long and dreary succession of yesterdays—why it promised eager hopes and eager interests to be fulfilled. Then I remembered, and my pulses beat faster. Yesterday, I despaired; today, I hoped.

A woman had come into my life—a goddess— Diana of the silver bow. Chaste and cold as the snows on the Alpine heights I could see from my window in the blue distance, yet she had called, she had spoken to me. Then, disdainfully cruel, she had gone as she had come. But I was to pursue. The very audacity of my resolution

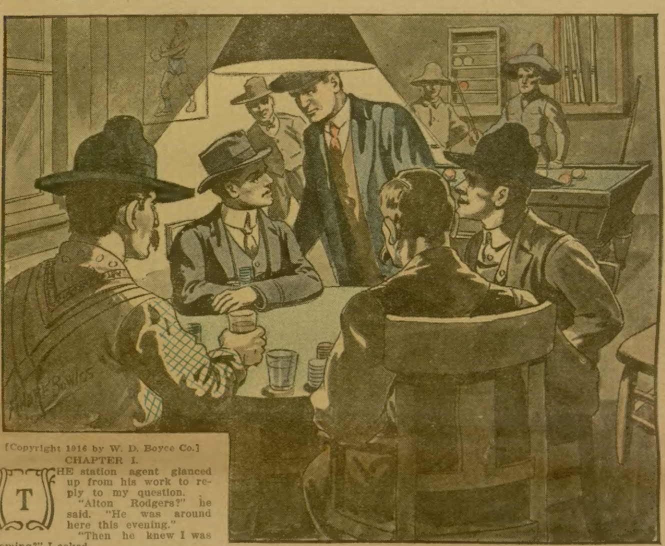
(Continued on Page 27.)

MY FRIEND ALTON

Or,

The Adventure at Wells Canyon

By Frederic Knowles



"I don't play with everybody."

[Copyright 1916 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

CHAPTER I.

THE station agent glanced up from his work to reply to my question.

"Alton Rodgers?" he said. "He was around here this evening."

"Then he knew I was coming?" I asked.

"I reckon so. Mebbe he is up town somewhere."

I doubted this. That would not be Alton's way. I told the agent so.

"Well," he said after a moment, "I'm sure he hasn't been here for an hour. Inquire at the livery stable. If his team is still there you can know that he is in town." And he told me where I would find the place.

I thanked him and went out across the tracks toward the lights of the town shining among the trees, altho, to tell the truth, I was not in a mood to thank anybody. The train from the East had been three hours late on account of a washout in the mountains, and I had been set down at the little station, thinking my troubles were now over. Then I discovered that my friend, Alton Rodgers, was not there to meet me.

As I stumbled along the path leading from the station to the town, I moodily decided it was up to me to scurry about and locate him if possible. Certainly this had not been his style in the old days; and I was further surprised at this action, knowing that Alton was one of those rare people who never change.

Presently the path I was following issued on a road; in this case a street, for the houses comprising the greater part of Wells Canyon lay along it. In a few moments I came to the livery stable, as the high false front proclaimed in great letters dimly made out in the darkness. It seemed deserted.

Having rapped once or twice without result, I decided that I was not making sufficient noise to attract attention. My knuckles stung from contact with the rough boards.

"This is no way to run a livery stable," I remarked to myself, with a glance at the darkened windows of the little office.

"No, I reckon you are right about that, pardner," said a voice at my elbow. "Take a rock."

I faced about. Standing behind me was a tall figure, indistinct in the darkness, his outline blurred against the ghostly gray of the buildings across the street. Of the fellow's features I could make out but little; they appeared merely a blot of lighter color against his hat. Something in the tone he had used when speaking to me clashed on my nerves, and altho I had understood him perfectly, I said:

"Excuse me, sir, but I'll have to ask you to repeat your remark."

Despite the darkness, I could see that he grinned slightly.

"I said to get a rock," he told me. "Something like that is needed to bring those fellows inside to life. Here," and stooping, he felt about on the hard ground for an instant. Then with a little exclamation of satisfaction he handed me a small stone.

With the stranger's offering I beat a loud tattoo on the planks of the door, that quickly brought results. From inside a sleepy voice shouted something unintelligible, and a moment later a light flashed up behind the drawn blinds. Some one moved about for a few moments and then the door opened to silhouette a short, thick-necked, and sleepy-headed youth against the lantern on the table behind him.

"Hello, Jake," he said, looking past me. "What can I do for you?"

"No hurry," returned the fellow at my side. "Fix up this gent first."

"I'm looking for Rodgers, Alton Rodgers," I explained. "He was to meet me at the train, but for some reason or other——"

"Sure," broke in the youth with a glance in my direction. "You are the gent who was to come in on the train this evening. Well, Al has gone."

"Gone?"

"Uh-huh. Went about dark, just after the stage from the south came in. He come hurryin' down here and said he couldn't wait for you, but that important business demanded his attention. He took his team and hit the road after tellin' me to hold a horse for you and give you a letter."

"A letter?"

"Uh-huh. Wrote it just before he left, and told me to hold it for you."

"Did he mean for me to go to his place tonight?" I demanded.

"Can't say, but him givin' me orders about the horse would make it look that way. Better read the letter and see. Come on in and look it over while I attend to Jake."

The youth opened a drawer in the table and produced a sealed envelope which he handed to me. Then taking a second lantern from the hook, he lit it and disappeared thru the door leading into the stables, with Jake following close behind him. When they had gone I dropped into a battered swivel chair before the table, and tore open the letter. A glance told me it had been written hastily even before the contents assured me of the fact. It read as follows:

"Dear Frank:

"I'm sorry I can't be on hand to meet you, but something has turned up that has to be attended to without loss of time. I have left word with the livery stable people for them to give you a horse, and you can come out to the ranch tonight if you like, altho I expect it will be rather late. Get a few directions from some one, and you can't lose the way. However, if you don't want to try it, you can stay in town till tomorrow afternoon. I ought to be back by that time if everything goes well. I can take you out then if you care to wait so long.

"Don't take this too hard, Frank; I wouldn't have had it happen for a lot, but this is a case of must, and I have to make the best of it. Don't be too downhearted; I'll try to explain when I see you.

"Yours,
"ALTON RODGERS."

"P. S. Of course, I know you too well to think you will say anything about my going. I don't want too much talk. Just burn this letter."

I dropped the note on the table and glanced over it again with no small degree of surprise. This was mighty peculiar, I thought. Why did Alton want a seemingly unimportant thing like that destroyed? But there were the words, "just burn this letter" to prove his wish. There was certainly nothing of a deadly character about it. Why was he so particular? Alton had never been given in the slightest to pseudo dramatic effects or that kind of thing, and his singular request made it seem the more incomprehensible.

However, he should have his wish, I thought, and preparing to comply, I caught up the single sheet from the table. As I did so it seemed to me that the blank side of the paper felt more crisp to the touch than the other. With some fair amount of curiosity I glanced at this reverse side, and with a slight start of amazement caught it closer to my eyes. If the not over-bright light did not deceive me, it would seem as tho some one had come very near carrying out Alton's request before the letter had come to my hands.

The affair was rapidly emerging from the commonplace into the mysterious. Dropping the letter into my pocket, I seized the envelope. In opening it I had torn off the end, scarcely touching the flap. On the little stove in the office a lard pail half filled with water bubbled merrily. In an instant I was holding the envelope in the steam, and a minute later, with nervous fingers, I had loosed the flap. One glance was enough—I knew beyond all shadow of doubt that some one had tampered with it; the flap was slightly discolored with tobacco. Alton, never under any circumstances, used the weed in any form.

Who had tampered with it? That, I had no way of telling. But wait. A closer inspection, and I discovered several minute fragments of tobacco leaf adhering to the softened mucilage. Snuff! That was something. The man who had opened the envelope was addicted to the habit of using snuff. Snuff chewers are rare in the West. Truly I was making progress.

From beyond the door I heard voices approaching. The stable hand and Jake were returning. I glanced about undetermined in my anxiety as to what course to pursue. From my pocket the letter seemed to be mutely appealing. Should I carry out my friend's request? After all, would the evidence of the envelope be worth preserving? I might be mistaken; Alton had requested me to burn the note. Without hesitation I drew out the note and dropped both it and the envelope into the flames of the stove.

As I stood with the lid to one side and watched the fire circle about the paper, something occurred to mystify me still further, and at the same moment clear up a thing before incomprehensible. For, in that moment of time when paper, glowing, momentarily resists the action of fire, I undoubtedly saw characters spring out between the lines of scorched ink. Only for a moment, and then the flames had blotted out everything, but nevertheless I was sure of what I had seen.

The sound of steps just outside the door recalled me to my surroundings, and I replaced the stove lid and was seated by the table when the youth entered. In the darkness of the stable the form of Jake was dimly visible at the point where the light from the office reached its limit of penetration. The youth put his extinguished lantern on the table. Outside I heard the sliding doors roll back, and presently Jake rode thru them, a shadowy horse and rider against the stars for an instant, and then he was gone, galloping.

The youth touched me on the shoulder.

"Want a horse?" he asked.

"I don't know."

He glanced at me curiously.

"Well, I wish you'd make up your mind. I want to get some sleep tonight." His tone was none too cordial.

I considered a moment while he eyed me impatiently.

"No," I said at last, "I guess I won't go tonight. I suppose I can get a bed here in town?"

"Sure. The roomin' house is the first one to the right after you cross the creek. Can't miss it."

I got to my feet, debating whether to question him as to the letter. If he had not appeared so exceedingly stupid I would have firmly believed that he read my intention almost as soon as it occurred to me, for his manner all at once became exceedingly sullen. He turned his back and tossed his gloves to the floor, and hung up the lantern, all the while ignoring me. I sat quietly in the swivel chair and watched him while he put some coal into the fire and left the door ajar in order that it might burn slowly and with little heat.

"How much do I owe you for your trouble?" I asked casually.

"Nothin'," he returned, without even glancing at me.

But it must have been some bother to you," I continued.

"Not at all. No trouble. Always glad to oblige."

"You say Alton left here about dusk?"

"Yes, that's what I said."

"Do you know when he will be back?"

"He didn't say."

"Tomorrow, you think?"

"Perhaps. You ought to know."

"Why?"

"I supposed the letter would tell you."

"Well, did it?"

His face flushed. This time he glanced at me.

"How should I know? Don't get gay."

"Not at all. Thanks for the information. Good night," and I went out.

CHAPTER II.

AS I stumbled along the rough street toward the creek and the rooming house beyond it, I mentally discussed the possibility of the stable boy being the opener of the letter. My hint as to his knowledge of the contents made him flush, but that explained nothing. Honest, he would be indignant; dishonest, he would be indignant, also. When moods and actions are well feigned only an expert of the experts can detect the spurious from the genuine. And, alas! I was not expert.

The really absorbing question before me concerned the writing I had seen on the burning paper. Of course I had heard of such things—invisible ink, and the like—but until that moment had always regarded them as implements of the story teller, and belonging, with the secret passage, pirate's gold, and those things. But, having read "The Gold Bug," I felt I could not be mistaken. The Paul Pry who had opened the envelope had undoubtedly read the secret writing; the scorched condition of the paper showed that. For the moment I regretted having destroyed the note, and then I remembered that if I had not done so I would never have known the real purpose of the letter. That is to say, an attempt to convey a secret message intended for my eyes alone. I cursed myself for my stupidity in not reading a deeper significance in the words, "Just burn this letter." To have written something more explanatory would have been to give away the secret. Alton had, no doubt, hoped that I would, in following his request, discover the secret writing in time to rescue the paper from the flames, and read what was disclosed by it.

One thing was certain; some other person was aware of the existence of the method used by Alton. In all probability this individual, whoever he was, had steamed open the envelope, extracted the note, heated it, and read the message, after which he replaced it as before. And all this pointed to the fact that my friend had used the form of communication previous to this. And so I arrived at the place where I began to look for a cause for all this. It is seldom that honest men have something to say that calls for such an elaborate form as invisible ink. The only logical conclusion was that—I paused, repelled at my own thought. If Alton Rodgers wasn't on the square, no one was.

Before me the rooming house loomed faintly on the right, and across the street the saloon sparkled light. It was not yet midnight, and I was in no mood for bed. Besides, there was always a possibility that one might learn something by keeping one's ears open. I decided for the saloon.

I pushed past the swinging doors and found myself in the barroom. Beyond, a wide doorway led into the rear room, a sort of poolroom and gambling hall combined, it seemed. From it came manifold sounds; the mild scuffle of chairs, clicking billiard balls, and the hum of voices proclaimed Wells Canyon at play.

The barroom was almost deserted. A bearded toper lounged on a bench and snored with open mouth. Besides him lay another, already between the stages of "going" and "gone." A young fellow seated at a little table in the corner read a newspaper and sipped at his beer. Behind the bar the barkeeper wiped glasses and puffed at a huge cigar. I paused before the tobacco case. The barkeeper threw down his towel and stepped up to wait on me.

"Them is fine," he offered, indicating a box of dark Havanas. "I reckon about the best this side the mountains. Try one?"

"No, thanks," I returned. "I'll smoke something lighter. By the way, I am out of snuff. You carry it in stock?"

"Nope," he replied; "no demand for it."

"Perhaps the store might have some?" I suggested.

"I expect so. You wanted a cigar?"

I bought one, and lounged against the bar, smoking idly. The barkeeper, affable, seemed willing for conversation.

"Stoppin' long?" he inquired.

"I expect so; a month anyway. Alton Rodgers hasn't been around here this evening?"

Of course I knew he hadn't, but I was determined to learn something if possible, and the question seemed as good as another by way of opener. The barkeeper shook his head in reply.

"Nope, I don't believe so. I saw him about five o'clock. Lookin' for him especially?" His tone was blandly curious.

"Well," I said. "I wanted to see him, and I thought perhaps——"

"You ain't the sheriff from Keeserville?" asked the barkeeper.

"No," I smiled. "He isn't looking for Rodgers, is he?"

"He sure is." The barkeeper puffed idly.

His noncommittal remark rather took the wind out of my sails.

"But what could he want with Al Rodgers?" I demanded.

"Well, you see, ever since Al shot Carlson they have been——"

"Carlson? Shot Carlson?"

"Yep. Of course, nobody saw it done, but there can't be any doubt of it. Nobody blames Alton for it; Carlson was a mean skunk, and deserved all he got. If I had been in Al's place I would have done just as he did."

"Which was——" I encouraged, my heart pounding wildly.

"To up and shoot Carlson, as I was saying a minute ago."

"I hadn't heard about it," I said. "Tell me the particulars."

"Well, about two weeks ago—yes, perhaps a little further away than that—Carlson—he is one of the nesters out in the basin—was in here at the saloon one evening. Along about midnight he begun to get pretty well lit up, and rather quarrelsome. I was debatin' whether to throw him out or not when the trouble begun. Before I could interfere it was all over."

"Yes?" said I. "Go on."

"Well, I had just waited on a gent when the door swung open and in walked Alton. As luck would have it, Carlson was standin' just back of the swingin' door there, and as Al shoved it open it caught him on the side of the head. Al saw what he had done, and apologized to Carlson for hittin' him, sayin' he ought to have had his eyes open, and so on. But nothin' like that suited the drunken fool. He was boilin' mad and made a swipe at poor Al. Well, Al didn't offer to hit back; just blocked the blow and started on. And then Carlson, with blood in his eye, lugged out a six-shooter and cut loose at Al. But he was so blamed drunk he missed every time, and Al closed in and laid him cold with one to the jaw.

"When Carlson came to he was pretty well sobered up. He appeared to be ashamed of himself, and told Al he was sorry for what he had done. He said that, but between you and me, his eye had a mean look in it, as tho he didn't mean his words. Of course, there is no way to tell for sure, but it looked that way."

"And then?" I prompted.

"Everything was all right for a day or two. Everybody thought we had seen the last of the trouble, and most of the boys had forgotten about it when word come that Al was missin' cattle. One day he lost about fifty, which is quite a sum for poor Al, seein' as he was only makin' a start in the business. While I didn't say nothin' when I heard about it, I at once thought of Carlson. And I reckon Al did, too, for he come into town for cartridges that evenin', lookin' pretty grim. The next day he missed more cattle, calves this time."

"Yes?" I filled in the barkeeper's pause. "This looked bad."

"It sure did. Al must have got pretty mad then. Anyway, the next day, Sam Meeker, a cowboy for the Wright outfit, found Carlson lyin' by the ashes of a dead fire. Two calves were bawlin' in a little corral nearby. And the thing that give the dead man away was that while the two calves in the corral hadn't any brands, the two old cows that hung about tryin' to get in were Al's. Everything showed bad for Carlson. Nobody would have said anything but for the fact that"—the barkeeper paused and glanced at me with a curious expression in his eyes.

"What was it?" I asked.

"Carlson had been shot from behind."

"They were sure about this?" I demanded.

"Certain. Two bullets struck him; neither of them went thru."

"But Alton wouldn't do that," I protested.

The barkeeper glanced at me keenly.

"You know him?" he demanded.

"I ought to," I answered. "I went to school with him."

"And so you don't think Rodgers would do a thing like that?"

"I do not. I know Alton as well as any man alive, and that would be one of the last things he would ever be guilty of. Besides, he wouldn't need to; Al was always rather handy with a gun himself. He wouldn't need to take that kind of advantage of a Swede."

"My idee exactly," affirmed the barkeeper. "I tried to tell the sheriff that, but he wouldn't listen."

"Then he really had a warrant for Al's arrest?"

The barkeeper nodded.

"You see at the inquest some of the nesters on the jury wanted to know about those bullets that struck Carlson from behind. There would never have been a word said about the shootin' if it hadn't been for that. Between you and me, I don't blame Al for it, anyway. But of course the law looks at it different. However, I don't think the sheriff is so very anxious to run Al to earth."

"No?" I said. "Why didn't Al turn out those calves if he shot Carlson? I should have thought he would do that."

"You can search me," replied the barkeeper.

"And what does Alton say for himself?" I demanded. "Anything?"

"No, sir. He won't talk."

"He comes around here?"

"Certain."

"Why doesn't the sheriff catch him?"

"Well, sir, Al seems to have a knack of dodgin' him without tryin'. As I said before, I don't think the sheriff cares whether he gets him or not. He ain't made no very husky search so far, anyway."

"And those are the circumstances of the whole affair?" I asked.

"About all that I know, at least," replied the barkeeper.

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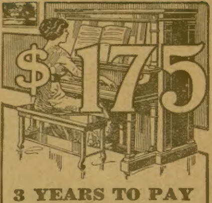

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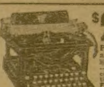

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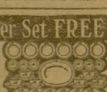

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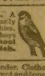

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"It seems funny about Al," I said. "I wish I could see him."

"I don't think you would learn much. I tell you he won't talk."

"But he ought to declare himself one way or another," I said.

"That's what we told him."

"And he said——"

"Absolutely nothin'. Just grunted and turned away."

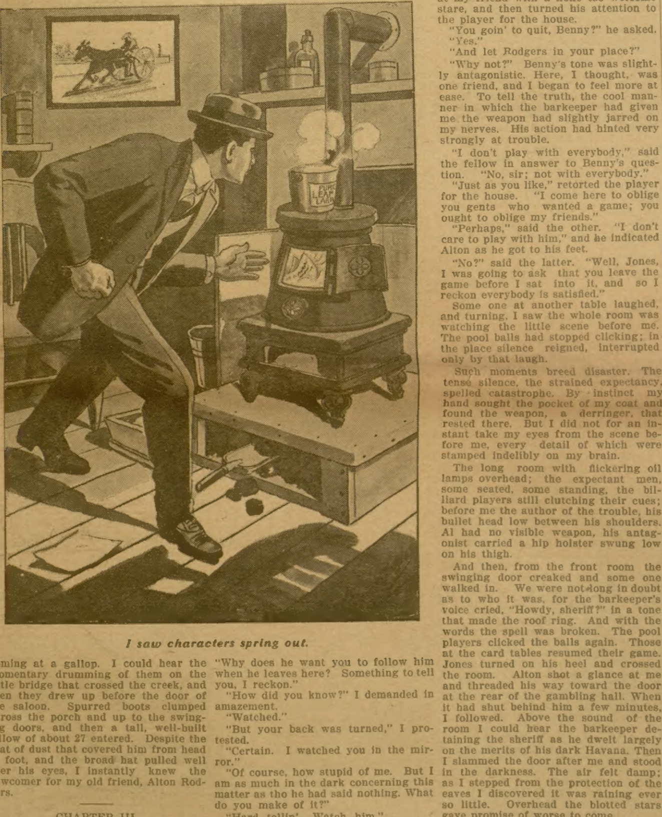
"That isn't Alton's style," said I slowly:

"No, it ain't," agreed the barkeeper. "I was tellin' the boys that there was somethin' behind all this."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, somethin' that he don't want to get out. Mebbe he killed Carlson and mebbe he didn't. But one thing is certain——"

The barkeeper paused at the sound of hoofs. Rapidly they grew louder, coming at a gallop. I could hear the momentary drumming of them on the little bridge that crossed the creek, and then they drew up before the door of the saloon. Spurred boots clumped across the porch and up to the swinging doors, and then a tall, well-built fellow of about 27 entered. Despite the coat of dust that covered him from head to foot, and the broad hat pulled well over his eyes, I instantly knew the newcomer for my old friend, Alton Rodgers.



I saw characters spring out.

CHAPTER III.

As I remarked before, the front room of the saloon was nearly empty. On the bench the two drunken men snored lustily. By the table the young fellow I had noticed before continued to read his paper, after a single glance toward the new arrival. I would have cried my friend's name had not the barkeeper suddenly seized my arm in a grasp of iron, warning me to be silent. And as for Alton, he looked straight at me until sure he had my attention, and then slowly closed one eye and shook his head in a manner more eloquent than words.

After that Alton walked over to the bar and ordered beer, and asked me, as tho he had never known me, if I would drink with him. I said yes, and leaned on the bar while the barkeeper filled two glasses and set them before us. Alton drained his almost at a gulp, and then turned the glass slowly in his hand and watched the foam remaining become liquid again. Presently, when the barkeeper turned his back, he put his finger in the dregs and wrote on the polished bar-top, "Don't talk," and indicated himself.

After that, seeing that I understood, he erased the words and wrote instead, "Follow me," and motioned toward the door; and then, seeing it was not perfectly clear to me, added, "When I go."

After this singular proceeding, he turned and strolled calmly toward the back room and the crowd.

"The fool, to come here," whispered the barkeeper in my ear. "Carlson had friends, and some of them are here tonight. Al had better be careful what he does."

"Do you know his object in doing this mad thing?" I asked.

"Search me," replied the barkeeper. "Why does he want you to follow him when he leaves here? Something to tell you, I reckon."

"How did you know?" I demanded in amazement.

"Watched."

"But your back was turned," I protested.

"Certain. I watched you in the mirror."

"Of course, how stupid of me. But I am as much in the dark concerning this matter as tho he had said nothing. What do you make of it?"

"Hard tellin'. Watch him."

I faced the rear room. Alton was nearly to the door, walking leisurely One or two men had glanced up from the card tables at his approach, and not all the faces were cordial in their expression. I felt the barkeeper's hand on my shoulder.

"Got a gun?" he whispered hoarsely.

I shook my head.

"Can you get one?" he continued.

"No, not tonight."

"Here, then."

I felt his hand steal along my arm and then something dropped into my pocket that rang faintly upon my metal-handled penknife.

"Don't use it unless you have to," whispered the barkeeper, "but be ready if something starts. I won't be far off. You go into the poolroom and keep your eyes open. Understand?"

Trying to imitate Al's care-free manner, I walked down the room and thru the doorway. Just inside stood the first of several card tables. About it sat four men, three of them dressed in overalls, and wearing boots and big hats. The other was a little fellow slightly under the middle height, dressed in black. His slender, delicate hands seemed out of place, somehow, among the great red fists of his fellow players. But, after watching him manipulate the cards for a moment I began to feel sorry for the three who sat with him. Surely this was the player for the house. Alton stood beside the table, watching the progress of the game for a few minutes, and then touched the young fellow in black.

"I'll get in, Benny, if you don't mind," he said evenly.

"All right, Al. Just a moment."

The player seated at Benny's right, a heavy-set fellow of probably 40, glanced at my friend with a none too welcome stare, and then turned his attention to the player for the house.

"You goin' to quit, Benny?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And let Rodgers in your place?"

"Why not?" Benny's tone was slightly antagonistic. Here, I thought, was one friend, and I began to feel more at ease. To tell the truth, the cool manner in which the barkeeper had given me the weapon had slightly jarred on my nerves. His action had hinted very strongly at trouble.

"I don't play with everybody," said the fellow in answer to Benny's question. "No, sir; not with everybody."

"Just as you like," retorted the player for the house. "I come here to oblige you gents who wanted a game; you ought to oblige my friends."

"Perhaps," said the other. "I don't care to play with him," and he indicated Alton as he got to his feet.

"No?" said the latter. "Well, Jones, I was going to ask that you leave the game before I sat into it, and so I reckon everybody is satisfied."

Some one at another table laughed, and turning, I saw the whole room was watching the little scene before me. The pool balls had stopped clicking; in the place silence reigned, interrupted only by that laugh.

Such moments breed disaster. The tense silence, the strained expectancy, spelled catastrophe. By instinct my hand sought the pocket of my coat and found the weapon, a derringer, that rested there. But I did not for an instant take my eyes from the scene before me, every detail of which were stamped indelibly on my brain.

The long room with flickering oil lamps overhead; the expectant men, some seated, some standing, the billiard players still clutching their cues; before me the author of the trouble, his bullet head low between his shoulders. Al had no visible weapon, his antagonist carried a hip holster swung low on his thigh.

And then, from the front room the swinging door creaked and some one walked in. We were not long in doubt as to who it was, for the barkeeper's voice cried, "Howdy, sheriff?" in a tone that made the roof ring. And with the words the spell was broken. The pool players clicked the balls again. Those at the card tables resumed their game. Jones turned on his heel and crossed the room. Alton shot a glance at me and threaded his way toward the door at the rear of the gambling hall. When it had shut behind him a few minutes, I followed. Above the sound of the room I could hear the barkeeper detaining the sheriff as he dwelt largely on the merits of his dark Havana. Then I slammed the door after me and stood in the darkness. The air felt damp; as I stepped from the protection of the eaves I discovered it was raining ever so little. Overhead the blotted stars gave promise of worse to come.

"Alton!"

I listened intently for the reply, but none came. A glance about disclosed nothing. From the gambling hall the light streamed thru the windows and lit up the damp ground a few feet from the wall, and thinking to show my friend who I was, I stepped into the light from one of them.

But without result. Nor did my second call, slightly louder than the first, produce any result. I paused, nonplused for the instant, and then walked into the darkness. Ten yards from the door my outstretched hand encountered a post with the poles of a fence stretching away on either side. Here for a moment I paused to consider what I should do.

My friend had wished me to follow him but a short five minutes before. It seemed now as tho he had changed his mind. I was of half a notion to re-

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turn to the saloon when something occurred that drove all else from my brain.

CHAPTER IV.

TO MY right I was suddenly aware of some one cautiously moving in the darkness. A man, because I could hear spurs jingling ever so faintly; a cautious man, because his movements were executed with the greatest care.

For a moment I thought to cry out, thinking it Alton reconnoitering for some reason or other. But before I could decide what to do, a yellow flash knifed the darkness, and a revolver cracked sharply. Simultaneously with the shot, broken glass tinkled on the ground, and from within the gambling hall some one cried out as tho in pain.

I admit that I was terribly startled. My first impulse was to flee, and I crawled hastily thru the fence. My second thought was one of indignation and high anger again this foul murder, and remembering the derringer, I ran toward the spot from whence the shot had come.

The darkness, as I stated before, was intense. The slight rain had softened the ground, and my light shoes made scarcely any noise as I ran along the fence. Therefore the surprise was mutual when I suddenly came against a figure that rose from the ground before me. There was no time to use a weapon, and the other fellow was in the same fix. With a sense of desperation I wrapped my arms about him as he clutched in turn at me. But ducking low, he succeeded only in gouging my face slightly while I got a firm grip on his shoulders. In the first moments of the contest I realized that he was stronger than I. If I would win it must be by superior skill, which same I sadly lacked. Once I thought I had him, when I employed a trick learned at college. Imagine my surprise when I felt it repeated with vigor, and I went headlong.

As I struck my head rang with something hard, a stone no doubt. My involuntary exclamation at the pain brought a peculiar change over my antagonist. His hands loosed on my throat, and in a tense voice he asked me if I were injured.

"Al!" I stuttered. "You?"

"Frank!" he returned in equal astonishment. "I thought——" he paused.

"And I thought," I retorted, "that I was fighting the man that fired the shot a few moments ago. Al, it wasn't you?"

"You think so, Frank?" His voice broke.

"No, Al. Forgive me," I stammered. "I believe in spite of all that they said that you are square as ever. But they——"

He anticipated my remark and cut me short.

"Let them come," he said, motioning toward the aroused gambling hall. "I'm tired of the whole thing; it has gone too far as it is."

"They will kill you," I protested. "Get away while there is time."

"No. Let them come," he sneered.

"You won't try to get away?"

"No."

"But they will think that you did the shooting and——"

"I don't care."

"I believe you are innocent, Alton. Let the others think as they please. Get away, Alton, while there is time!"

"Here they come," he retorted. 'Out of the way, Frank! It is too late to go now. Jones was a nester, and that place is full of his kind. It is a telegraph pole for yours truly. Watch out! They'll be shooting in a minute."

"Jones was the one who was shot?"

"Yes. Watch out, Frank," and I saw Alton's pistol gleam dully.

"Run!" I urged. "You can still get away."

"Too late."

Like a flash an inspiration came to me.

"Crawl along the fence," I whispered, and ran into the darkness, taking the opposite direction. Some distance away I paused and fired my derringer empty, cried out once or twice as tho in terror, and dropped to the ground after a shout for help.

In a second the men from the saloon were stringing toward me, shooting and shouting as they came. One of the foremost stumbled across my prostrate body, and I groaned feebly.

"Here he is!" he shouted. "Here, boys!" and he collared me.

They gathered around, half a dozen or more, and some one struck a match. At this I opened my eyes wide, and summoning a terrified stare, glanced about as tho in fear.

"That ain't the guy," said Benny, peering over the shoulder of a tall fellow who had lit the match.

"Where has he gone?" I demanded as tho dazed. "Did you get him?"

"Who? Get who?" cried Benny.

"The villain that shot into the gambling hall," I returned. "He ran—I saw him, and tried to stop him. He struck at me——" I paused and passed my hand over my cheek and smeared the blood from a scratch I had received in my tussle with Alton.

"He struck at me," I continued weakly, "and I shot, but I was dazed." I paused as tho exhausted. Benny bent over me.

"Look at his head," he said. "Some rap, I claim; a little more and he would have been a goner."

I grew slightly alarmed. From Benny's tone one would think my brains were on the point of running out. He went on:

"Here, boys, carry him inside. I believe he is hurt pretty bad. Easy there!" And tenderly they picked me up bodily.

They put me on the floor of the poolroom with a chair cushion under my shoulders, and tied up my head, which in truth was aching terribly. After that they sat around impatiently until I should be able to continue my story. Their remarks told me that Alton was the suspected man. And in truth, one could not blame them so much for the belief, considering that Jones had been shot immediately following his interrupted scene with Rodgers. Jones, I learned, had died almost instantly. With something akin to terror I thought of Alton's speedy fate if he should fall into the hands of these enraged men. Thinking to give him as much time as possible to get away, I took my own gait of recovery, and a quarter of an hour had passed before I spoke.

All this while the young fellow called Benny had been sitting near me, glancing at my hurts, and listening to the conversation of those about him. As for himself, he said nothing. Presently I raised on my elbow.

"What did the fellow look like?" asked the tall man, coming nearer.

"About my height," I told him. "But quite a lot heavier. It was too dark to see more. I think he had a horse a little way off, for I heard galloping immediately after he left."

"In which direction?" asked Benny, with a curious glance.

"I can't say for certain," I replied.

"That's all you know about him, stranger?" continued Benny.

I nodded weakly.

Upon that, the men conferred hastily among themselves, and went out, leaving the room deserted except for the barkeeper, Benny, and myself. When the sound of the others' departure had died away, the player for the house came toward me.

"I reckon you feel like bed?" he suggested.

"Yes, if you will help me up," I began. "I think I can make it over to the hotel. Now——"

"All right," said Benny, cheerfully, and he had me standing in an instant.

"Now," said Benny, "you can lean on my shoulder if you like. We only have to cross the street, you know."

In that manner we negotiated the barroom and the street. Benny knocked, and presently the landlord appeared. Between him and Benny they got me upstairs and into a room at the front of the building. When I had been undressed and put between the sheets, the landlord went away, and left only Benny standing beside me.

"Anything I can do?" he asked me.

"I would like to have you see to sending my trunks up here in the morning," I told him. "The checks are in my coat."

"Anything else?"

"I believe not."

The young fellow lingered with his hand on the knob of the door.

"Excuse me, but your trunks don't by any chance contain an actor's layout, do they?"

"No," I said. "Why?"

"I just wondered. Good night," and he went down the stairs whistling, which was rude of him considering that I was a rather sick man.

CHAPTER V.

THE sun streaming across the head of my bed woke me. A glance at my watch showed half-past seven. Time to be up. I sprang into a sitting posture and examined my head with careful fingers. The swelling had greatly subsided and no longer pained a particle. The scratches on my cheek gave a drawn feeling to my face, uncomfortable until the stiffness had gone.

My rumpled and muddy clothes lay on the floor, and a sight of their condition brought to my mind my trunks. Would Benny carry out my request, I wondered. Probably the exciting events of the evening had made him forget all about them. But in this I did him an injustice, for in a very few minutes a wagon clattered up before the steps of the hotel, and soon I heard heavy footsteps climbing the stairs. The door opened, and a red-faced youth entered with a trunk on his back, which he deposited with a crash in the far corner of the room. Going out, he returned soon with the second, and behind him came Benny.

When I had paid the porter and he was gone, Benny drew a chair up beside my bed and calmly deposited himself in it.

"The boys sent me over to see that you didn't get lonesome," he explained. "How do you feel this morning?"

"Pretty fair," I acknowledged. "But I'm hungry."

"I supposed you would be, and so I told Fields—that's the landlord—to send up breakfast for two. You see I haven't eaten either."

"And while we wait," I suggested, "you might tell me the news."

"There isn't much," he said slowly, as if weighing his words.

"No? I suppose they haven't found the man that killed Jones?"

"Not a sign of him yet, but nearly a dozen men have gone out after him. I expect to hear something this morning."

"They are up against a pretty hard proposition," I offered.

"Not so hard as you think. Remember it rained last night. That makes tracking easy."

"Which way did the fellow go?"

"West."

"They are sure?"

"Oh, fairly so."

"Where is the sheriff?"

"With one bunch of four that have gone up the canyon. Real men in that bunch; it will go hard with the killer if they come onto him."

"And the others?"

Benny waved his hand.

"Nesters," he said, "and most of them ignorant about tracking. A good man could laugh at them and all their efforts. Of course, if they come on him unawares, he wouldn't have a show against so many." And Benny encircled his neck with his hands and jerked upward.

A sudden thought struck me—a thought that made me uneasy.

"Have they looked for tracks back of the saloon this morning?" I asked.

"I and Whistler——"

"Whistler? Who is Whistler?" I questioned.

"The barkeeper."

"Oh." I began to feel better.

"I and Whistler," Benny went on, "went out there real early; as soon as we could see, in fact, and looked careful."

"And you found——" I prompted.

"Not a thing," said Benny, promptly. "I never saw such a clean get-away. What few tracks there were were trampled so much that you couldn't tell a thing about it."

I began to think Benny was decidedly a treasure.

"That was too bad," I said. "And so they couldn't tell a thing?"

(Continued on Page 29.)

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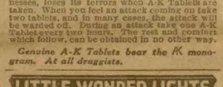

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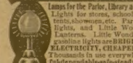

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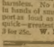

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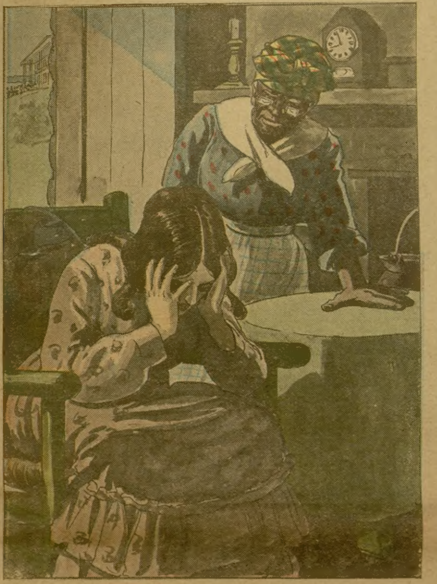
Or, The Hungerford Manor Tragedy

By Emma Howard Wight



"Don't you want to see the Massa's funeral?"

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Begun in No. 6, February 5. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER IV—(Continued).

EUGENE stared in amazement.

"Marry Dorothy?" he repeated.

"Yes, she loves you."

"I suppose she is fond of me," declared Eugene. "I am almost the same as a brother to her."

Marshall shook his head.

"She does not care for you in that way," he said, with decision. "I have watched her closely since your return, and I have seen that to which you are evidently blind—she is in love with you."

Eugene flushed uncomfortably.

"I am very sorry to hear it," he declared, with sincerity. "I could hardly care more for Dorothy if she were in fact my sister, but that is all."

Marshall smiled.

"She is pretty and sweet and she loves you. You can learn to love her as she loves you," he declared, with conviction. Eugene was silent. He looked rather pale. Marshall glanced at him sharply. "You haven't set your heart on marrying any one else, have you?" he asked anxiously.

"No," replied Eugene.

Marshall drew a breath of relief.

"Then it's all right."

"Why are you so anxious for me to marry Dorothy?" asked Eugene, tensely.

"Because her happiness is very dear to me. Dorothy's father was the best friend I had in the world. He saved my life at the risk of his own. He died a poor man and left me his only child. Her happiness and welfare are very dear to me. Of late she has not been happy. She has changed; I have seen that. Some of her pretty color has gone; she is quiet and grave. I miss her happy singing thru the house, her bright laugh. I cannot bear to know that she is unhappy. You alone have the power to make her happy. And as your wife, her future is provided for. It is not in my power to provide for her after my death. As you know, everything reverts to you. Since I brought Dorothy here, a little girl of 10, I have had it in my mind that some day she would be your wife." He leaned forward and laid his hand on Eugene's arm. "You're not going to disappoint and hurt me, are you, laddie?"

Eugene lifted his eyes and looked with a steady smile into his brother's questioning ones.

"No," he replied. "If it is true that Dorothy loves me as you claim, I will marry her whenever you wish."

Marshall's face cleared; he smiled.

"Thank you, laddie. I thought you would not fail me."

Eugene left the library and went in search of Dorothy. She was still on the veranda. She turned to Eugene as he came to her side. Observing her closely, Eugene saw that she was changed. In the moonlight, she looked pale, and her eyes had a plaintive expression. Eugene felt a thrill of compassion, for he was very fond of her.

"Dorothy," his heart did not beat a shade quicker, and he spoke very calmly, "will you marry me?"

She stared up at him half wonderingly, her breath coming quickly over her parted lips; then an exquisite pink crept into her cheeks, her eyes drooped.

"I love—you," she murmured.

He stooped and kissed her with quiet tenderness.

The following night Eugene and Lorine, the octoroon, met. Holding her tightly in his arms, he told her of his intended marriage. She was silent for a few moments, then she lifted her wonderful eyes to his a little sadly.

"I knew, my beloved, that you would marry some day," she said.

"I do not love her," he protested passionately. "I am going to marry her because it is my brother's wish."

"She loves you?"

"Yes," he admitted.

She smiled faintly and laid her head on his breast. He kissed her passionately, whispering that he would never love any one as he loved her. She suppressed the little quivering sigh that arose to her lips. She knew that the time would come when his love for wife and children would blot out his love for the slave girl. She knew that it was inevitable and only natural, but in her soul she knew that she would love him as long as her life should last.

CHAPTER V.

JOHN RUSSELL, commonwealth attorney, was sitting in his office in Winchester, the county seat. Suddenly the door opened hastily, and Luther Pannett, sheriff of the county, entered. Russell glanced up at him a little inquiringly.

"Marshall Hungerford has been murdered," said the sheriff.

The commonwealth attorney was greatly startled.

"Murdered?" he exclaimed. "Who did it?"

The sheriff shrugged his shoulders as he sat down.

"Nobody knows. He was found this morning in a grove between the house and the slave quarters, shot thru the heart. He had gone out squirrel hunting, and the deed was done with his own rifle, which was found some little distance from the body. One of the Hungerford darkies has come for me to go out to the Manor, and I thought that

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you might want to go along. I have my horse and buggy outside."

The commonwealth attorney at once arose.

"Yes, I'll go along," he said. "Any one suspected of the murder?" he asked, as they passed into the outer office.

"The darky says not," replied the sheriff.

When they reached Hungerford Manor, they were shown into the library, and after a little while Eugene Hungerford entered. The commonwealth attorney uttered some words of sympathy to which Eugene replied mechanically. He was very pale and seemed dazed by the shock of his brother's tragic death. He motioned them to be seated, and dropped wearily into a chair.

"We've come about the murder, Mr. Hungerford," said the commonwealth attorney. He paused. Eugene looked at him without speaking. "Will you tell us all you know about the murder, Mr. Hungerford?" urged the commonwealth attorney, gently.

Eugene passed his hand dazedly over his brow, as tho trying to collect his thoughts. The two men saw that he was suffering from shock, and waited quietly for him to speak.

"My brother went out squirrel hunting this morning," Eugene began laboredly. "I think it was about ten o'clock. At dinner time he had not returned. We did not wait dinner for him, as he very frequently stayed out all day when he went hunting. We were at the table, Miss Downall and I, when Elias, one of the darkies, came to the house and said that his master was lying dead in the maple grove. I went to the place. I found Marshall lying on his back with a bullet wound in the left breast, over his heart. He was dead."

He paused.

"Where was the rifle?" asked Russell.

Again Eugene seemed to have difficulty in collecting his thoughts. The commonwealth attorney explained that he wished to know how far the rifle was from the body.

"I—I didn't notice," Eugene replied wearily. "But," with an effort to pull himself together, "Elias can tell you."

He pulled the bell rope and told the colored girl who answered to send Elias to the library.

"Mr. Hungerford, do you know of any one who would have a motive in taking your brother's life?" asked Russell.

"No," replied Eugene, unhesitatingly. "I do not believe my brother had one single enemy. To my knowledge there was no one who could have a motive in taking his life."

"How about the slaves?" suggested the sheriff. "Negroes are very often treacherous and vindictive."

Eugene shook his head.

"My brother was a kind master; his negroes all loved him," he declared.

At that moment, a brown-skinned darky, about 24 years of age, entered.

"This is Elias," said Eugene.

The commonwealth attorney glanced the darky over attentively as he asked:

"It was you who found the body of Mr. Hungerford?"

"Ya'as, sah," replied Elias, and he continued without being questioned. "I war gwine fru de grove to de quartahs, and I done come on de massa layin' on de groun' dade, wid one side ob his shootin' jacket soaked fru wid blood."

"Did you know that he had been shot?"

"I didn't know fo' sho', but I reckoned so."

"Where was your master's rifle when you discovered the body?"

"De rifle war lyin' under a tree and 'side it war two squirrels."

"About how far from the body was the rifle?"

Elias considered a moment.

"I reckon it war 'bout fifteen feet."

"What did you do after you discovered the body?"

"I run back to de big house and tell Marse Eugene."

The commonwealth attorney turned to Eugene.

"You went at once to the scene of the murder?"

"Yes." A shiver passed over him.

"You had the body brought at once to the house?"

"Yes, and sent for our family physician, Doctor Farber. He said Marshall had been dead about two hours."

"Was there a post-mortem?"

"No, Doctor Farber said it was unnecessary. The bullet wound in the breast showed how my brother was killed. He probed for the bullet and found that it fitted Marshall's rifle."

There was a silence of some moments, then the commonwealth attorney asked:

"You know of no one who could throw any light on the murder, Mr. Hungerford?"

Eugene shook his head.

"I do not." A spasm of pain crossed his face. "It is to me the most awful of mysteries. My brother and I were all the world to each other. If he had died a natural death, I could bear it better. But for him to be shot down, murdered. It seems too cruel." He looked at the commonwealth attorney. "You'll make a thoro investigation, leave nothing undone to bring my brother's murderer to justice?"

"I shall certainly do my best," Russell declared, as he arose. "The murder is a strange one," he added thoughtfully. "There seems to be no clew to work on. But I shall put a police detective at work on the case at once."

The two officials took their departure.

"A strange case," the commonwealth attorney repeated, as they drove away from Hungerford Manor. He turned to the sheriff. "Can you make anything of it, Pannett?"

"No," replied the sheriff. "Now, if the rifle had been beside the body there might be a theory of suicide to work on."

"Well, yes," admitted Russell. "Tho it would be a little difficult for a man to shoot himself thru the heart with a rifle. Still I reckon it might be done. But there is no question of a suicide, it's a clear case of murder."

"The coroner's inquest may bring about some developments," suggested the sheriff.

"I doubt it," the commonwealth attorney declared. "I reckon Jim Macquillan would be the man to get at the bottom of this."

"If any one can, he will," said Pannett. "The murder was a terrible shock to young Hungerford. It has almost unbalanced him."

"They were very devoted to each other."

Upon reaching his office, the commonwealth attorney sent at once for Police Detective Macquillan. Macquillan was a short, stocky, red-haired man, about 45 years of age, with pale, expressionless blue eyes and a heavy, determined chin.

"I've just come from Hungerford Manor, Macquillan," said Russell. "I have failed to find out anything that would throw any light on the murder of Marshall Hungerford. Suspicion points to no one. There seems to be absolutely nothing to establish a motive. I want you to investigate the murder. Eugene Hungerford will, I am sure, reward you liberally if you succeed in discovering the murderer of his brother."

Macquillan nodded.

"I'll see what I can do. When is the inquest to be?"

"I shall have it this afternoon."

"I'll wait until that's over before doing anything," declared Macquillan, as he arose.

The commonwealth attorney had been right, the coroner's inquest threw no light upon the murder. It was shown that Marshall Hungerford had gone out squirrel hunting at about 10 o'clock, and between two and three hours later had been found dead in the maple grove with a bullet wound in the left breast. Doctor Farber had probed and found the bullet which fitted the dead man's rifle, three chambers of which had been discharged. Two squirrels were found beside the rifle. So far as was known, no one had seen the murdered man from the time he left the house until his body was found.

The verdict rendered was that deceased came to his death "from a bullet wound at the hands of parties unknown."

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER the commonwealth attorney and the sheriff had taken their departure, Eugene Hungerford dropped wearily into a chair, leaning his head on his hands. He was conscious of a great weariness and a sense of heavy oppression. After a few moments he lifted his head and looked up at a life-sized portrait of his brother that hung over the mantelpiece. Marshall was in riding dress and carried a whip in his hand. His eyes seemed looking down smilingly, tenderly, upon the pale, uplifted face of his young brother.

Eugene arose slowly. All memory of his brother's tragic death seemed blotted out.

"I'll go find Marshall," he murmured.

He passed out of the room, crossed the hall, and opened the door of the parlor. On the threshold he paused, staring at a flower-covered coffin in the center of the room. Beside the coffin a girl in a black gown stood weeping.

Very slowly Eugene went toward the coffin. The girl turned her tear-stained face toward him, but he did not appear to notice her. His eyes were fixed upon the white, still face in the coffin—his brother's face—and he remembered. A stablike pain shot thru him. For the first time he became conscious of the sobs of the girl. He turned his heavy eyes and looked at her.

"Marshall is dead," he said.

"Yes," sobbed Dorothy.

"Some one killed him." He passed his hand in a distressed way over his brow. "Who—did it?"

"Oh, I don't know," murmured Dorothy. "No one knows." She turned to him. "But we must find out, Eugene. We must punish the one who did it. We both loved him too much to allow his murderer to go unpunished. And he was so good, so good to us! I loved him so dearly."

Eugene looked from the dead face to the tear-stained one of the girl and remembered how dearly his brother had loved her, how almost his last thought in life had been to secure her happiness. He felt that Dorothy's happiness was a trust left him by his dead brother.

"I must not fail in that trust," he told himself there beside the dead. He took her hand. "Come, Dorothy," he said, and drew her toward the door. When they were outside, he drew her to him and kissed her gently. "Dorothy, when will you marry me?" he asked.

She shrank a little, looking at him half-wonderingly, half-reproachfully. He continued quietly:

"I think my brother would have wished us to marry soon."

A faint flush crept into her cheeks as she looked down.

"It shall be whenever you wish," she murmured.

She looked so young, so helpless, so unused to sorrow that a pitying tenderness rushed over Eugene. If he had loved her, he would have taken her in his arms and brought warmth and color to her face with fond words and tender caresses. As it was, he only took her hand and said very earnestly:

"Dear, I shall try to make you happy."

She glanced up at him shyly.

"I shall be very happy with you," she murmured.

And Eugene wondered if he would always be able to conceal from her that he did not love her, or if there would come a day when she would know and that knowledge make shipwreck of the happiness he was giving himself to secure. For the first time since his brother's death he thought of Lorine, and a great longing for her came over him. And in that moment he realized how madly he cared for the slave girl, and the knowledge almost appalled him.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD Elinore stood in the door of the cabin and watched the funeral train as it moved from the big house to the family burying ground a quarter of a mile away. Six negro slaves carried the coffin. A sort of dirge, inexpressibly mournful, was chanted by the slaves gathered about the grave.

"I seed de ole massa laid ober thar," murmured Elinore. "I nebber reckoned dat I gwine to lib to see Marse Mahshall tooken thar, too." She glanced back into the cabin at Lorine crouched in a low rocking chair. "Don't you wanter see de massa's funer'l, chile?" she queried.

Lorine shook her head.

"No," she replied shudderingly.

The old darky looked at her, a chuckling smile bringing numberless wrinkles on her parchment-like face.

"I reckon you won't fit ag'in' gwine up to de big house now, honey?" she said.

She moved with feeble steps toward the girl, as she spoke. Lorine lifted her beautiful, startled face. The vivid bloom of the lips had faded to pink, there were purple circles under her eyes. She looked worn to haggardness.

"Why do you say that?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"Ole Elinore's eyes am dim wid age, but she ain't blind yit," declared the old darky, sagely. "She hab seed de lovelight in yo' eyes and heahed de love trimblin' in yo' voice when Marse Eugene come to de cabin. And ole Elinore kin guess whar you goes nights

Doctor Says Nuxated Iron Will Increase Strength of Delicate People 200% in Ten Days

In many instances—Persons have suffered untold agony for years doctoring for nervous weakness, stomach, liver or kidney disease or some other ailment when their real trouble was lack of iron in the blood.—How to tell

New York, N. Y.—In a recent discourse Dr. E. Sauer, Specialist, of this city said: If you were to make an actual blood test on all people who are ill you would probably be greatly astonished at the exceedingly large number who lack iron and who are ill for no other reason than the lack of iron. The moment iron is supplied all their multitude of dangerous symptoms disappear. Without iron the blood at once loses the power to change food into living tissue and therefore nothing you eat does you any good; you don't get the strength out of it. Your food merely passes through your system like corn through a mill with the rollers so wide apart that the mill can't grind. As a result of this continuous blood and nerve starvation, people become generally weakened, nervous and all run down and frequently develop all sorts of conditions. One is too thin; another is burdened with unhealthy fat; some are so weak they can hardly walk; some think they have dyspepsia, kidney or liver trouble; some can't sleep at night, others are sleepy and tired all day; some fussy and irritable; some skinny and bloodless, but all lack physical power and endurance. In such cases, it is worse than foolishness to take stimulating medicines or narcotic drugs, which only whip up your fagging vital powers for the moment, maybe at the expense of your life later on. No matter what any one tells you, if you are not strong and well you owe it to yourself to make the following test. See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous run down people who were ailing all the time double, and even triple their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of their symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form, and this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. You can talk as you please about all the wonders wrought by new remedies, but when you come down to hard facts there is nothing like good old iron to put color in your cheeks and good sound, healthy flesh on your bones. It is also a great nerve and stomach strengthener and the best blood builder in the world. The only trouble was that the old forms of inorganic iron like tincture of iron, iron acetate, etc., often ruined people's teeth, upset their stomachs and were not assimilated and for these reasons they frequently did more harm than good. But with the discovery of the newer forms of organic iron all this has been overcome. Nuxated Iron for example, is pleasant to take, does not injure the teeth and is almost immediately beneficial.

NOTE—The manufacturers of Nuxated Iron have such unbounded confidence in its potency that they authorize the announcement that they will forfeit $100.00 to any Charitable Institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 200 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. Also they will refund your money in any case in which Nuxated Iron does not at least double your strength in ten days' time. It can easily be obtained from any good druggist.

FOOD FACTS

What An M. D. Learned.

A prominent physician down in Georgia went through a food experience which he makes public:

"It was my own experience that first led me to advocate Grape-Nuts food; and I also know from having prescribed it to convalescents and other weak patients that this food is a wonderful rebuilder and restorer of nerve and brain tissue, as well as muscle. It improves the digestion and patients gain, just as I did in strength and weight, very rapidly.

"I was in such a low state that I had to give up my work entirely and go to the mountains, but two months there did not improve me; in fact I was not quite as well as when I left home. My food did not sustain me and it became plain that I must change.

"I began to use Grape-Nuts and in two weeks I could walk a mile, and in five weeks returned to my home and practice, taking up hard work again. Since that time I have felt as well and strong as I ever did in my life.

"As a physician who seeks to help all sufferers I consider it a duty to make these facts public."

Trial 10 days on Grape-Nuts when the regular food does not seem to sustain the body will work wonders.

"There's a Reason." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

when you done steal outen de cabin." She leaned forward, peering curiously into the girl's face. "What you look so skeard 'bout, honey?"

Lorine arose and turned away, averting her face from the curious eyes of the old woman.

"I am not scared," she murmured, but she was trembling as she spoke and her eyes had a hunted look.

"Nancy says dat Marse Eugene gwine to marry Miss Dor'thy," said Elinore, seating herself in her big, comfortable rocking chair. Lorine did not speak. "But dat won't stan' in de way ob yo' gwine to de big house, chile. De Soufern ladies nebber bodder 'bout dey husbands habin' slave gals fo' sweethearts. Dey wouldn't demean demselbes dat a-way. Nancy 'lows Miss Dor'thy am mo' in lub wid Marse Eugene dan he am wid her."

Lorine listened, and a shining light crept into her velvet eyes. But very soon it faded, and with a shudder she put her hand over her ears to shut out the wailing of the slaves. Elinore had lighted her corncob pipe and was smoking contentedly.

"Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust."

The first clods fell upon the coffin of Marshall Hungerford. Dorothy sobbed, shivered, and leaned more heavily on Eugene's arm. The slaves had ceased singing, and the minister's voice alone broke the stillness. Then, when the flowers were being placed on the grave, the slaves sang very beautifully, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

Suddenly Eugene bent over Dorothy and said:

"Let us be married here at Marshall's grave, Dorothy."

"Oh!" She looked up at him, startled.

"We shall be fulfilling what was, perhaps, the dearest wish of his life," declared Eugene.

"Then—let it be so," murmured Dorothy.

Eugene said a few words to the minister. When the hymn was ended, the minister stopped those about the grave, as they were about to turn away, with a gesture.

"Please remain," he said. "I am about to unite in marriage Dorothy Downall and Eugene Hungerford."

And the almost breathless silence that followed was broken by the minister's voice beginning the marriage service.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON the day following the funeral, Police Detective Macquillan paid a visit to Hungerford Manor. He informed Eugene that he had been appointed by the commonwealth attorney to investigate the murder of his brother.

Eugene bowed. He glanced quickly at Macquillan, of whose cleverness he had heard. Macquillan's pale eyes were fixed on the wall opposite.

"Mr. Russell tells me that you claim you can throw absolutely no light on the murder," he said.

"I regret that such is the case," replied Eugene.

"Do you think that Mr. Hungerford could have aroused the animosity of one of his slaves? Cases of slaves murdering their masters have several times come under my observation."

Eugene shook his head.

"As I told Mr. Russell, my brother was a kind master and his slaves all loved him," he declared.

"Still there might have been an exception without your being aware of it," persisted Macquillan.

"That is possible, of course," admitted Eugene, but he did not look as tho he thought so. "If such was the case, Harper, the overseer, might know something about it. He is brought constantly in contact with the slaves."

Macquillan nodded.

"I'll have a talk with him. You have been away a great deal from Hungerford Manor during the past three or four years, Mr. Hungerford?"

"Yes, I was away at college. Miss Downall—" he corrected himself, his boyish face flushing— "Mrs. Hungerford was my brother's constant companion. Perhaps you would like to see her, tho I do not think she can tell you anything that will help about the murder."

"Yes, I would like to see her," said Macquillan.

Eugene sent for Dorothy. Macquillan questioned her closely, but found out nothing that bore any light on the murder. She corroborated Eugene that the slaves all loved Marshall Hungerford.

"Mr. Hungerford has just returned from an absence of several weeks?" questioned Macquillan.

"Yes," replied Eugene. He hesitated a moment, then explained that his brother had gone to the city to consult a physician.

"Was Mr. Hungerford in ill health?"

"He had organic heart trouble," Eugene explained.

Dorothy uttered a startled exclamation.

"And we never even suspected it!"

"He told me of it on his return. The physician had confirmed what he himself believed."

"Your brother was liable to die suddenly?" asked Macquillan, thoughtfully.

"Yes," Eugene sighed, thinking how suddenly and tragically his brother's life had ended at the hand of an assassin. "We must find out the truth about my brother's death!" he exclaimed, passionately. "I shall never know any peace of mind until we do. The mystery of it is maddening." He looked at Macquillan. "I will reward you liberally if you get at the bottom of it. I want my brother's death avenged."

Macquillan nodded, as he arose.

"I shall do my best," he said.

Accompanied by Elias, Macquillan went to the scene of the murder, a maple grove between the big house and the slave quarters.

"Dis heah grove am a great place fo' squir'ls," Elias informed Macquillan.

"Are the public allowed to hunt here?" asked Macquillan.

Elias shook his head.

"De massa uster let 'em hunt heah, but thar war too many hunters 'bout, so Marse Mahshall done post de grove." He stopped suddenly midway in the grove and pointed to the ground. "Heah whar I done foun' de massa dade."

Macquillan got down on his knees and carefully examined the ground around the spot indicated by the darky.

"No signs of any struggle," he murmured, rising after a few moments. "Where was the gun found?" he asked.

Elias pointed to a tree about fifteen feet distant.

"De gun war lyin' under dat thar tree. And 'side ob it war de two squir'ls what he done shot."

Macquillan walked to the tree.

"From the nature of the wound, the party who fired the shot must have stood here," said Macquillan, musingly. "I wonder how he came to be in possession of the rifle? There was no struggle for the possession of the rifle, or the grass would have been trodden." He turned to Elias. "You say the two squirrels were found beside the rifle?"

"Ya'as, sah."

"Humph! looks like the murdered man might have placed the rifle under the tree with the game, the murderer shot from there, and dropped the rifle afterward," murmured Macquillan.

"I reckon dat war de way ob it," exclaimed Elias, much impressed.

Macquillan smiled grimly.

"That's only a theory, Elias."

"Don't know what dat am.

"That means, Elias, that I am only guessing. The murderer may have placed the rifle to suit himself after he killed Marshall Hungerford."

Elias shook his head.

"I reckon he done tuk to his heels—mighty big fool ef he didn't. Massa Mahshall mighty good, kind man. Don't know why anybody want to kill him.

"Where is the overseer's house?" asked Macquillan, after a few moments.

"I show you," and Elias led the way to a neat frame house near the quarters. A tall, dark, sinewy man was seated on the porch, smoking a pipe and engaged in mending a harness.

"Dat am Mist' Harper, de oberseer on de po'ch," said Elias.

Macquillan nodded, and Elias turned away. The overseer glanced up inquiringly as Macquillan came up to the porch. The detective briefly explained his business, and the overseer put aside the harness and invited him to come up and have a seat.

"Where were you, Mr. Harper, on the morning of the murder?" asked Macquillan, as he sat down.

"I was right heah, workin' in my garden," was the reply. He grinned as Macquillan lifted his sandy brows. "I reckon you think nobody works on a plantation [illegible]

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Well, it's very near true. But I got mighty tired, after a little while, of having a nigger do everything but breathin' for me. So I took to workin' as a sort of recreation."

Macquillan swept with his eye the distance from the overseer's house to the maple grove.

"I should think that you might have heard the shot that killed Marshall Hungerford," he said.

"I did hear a shot, but I wouldn't say whether or not it was the shot that killed Mr. Hungerford. It may have been one of the shots fired by Mr. Hungerford himself. I reckoned that some one was hunting, and paid no attention to it."

"Mr. Hungerford had the name of being a kind master to his slaves?"

The overseer nodded

"There never was a better."

"I reckon he had never incurred the ill will of any of the niggers?"

The overseer shook his head.

"Not to my knowledge. They all seemed devoted to him." He paused, then added, with a short laugh, "All but Lorine."

"Lorine?"

"Yes, an octoroon slave gal that Mr. Hungerford bought last spring. He wanted the gal up at the big house, but she didn't take kindly to the notion."

"I suppose that didn't make any difference to Mr. Hungerford, however?" remarked Macquillan, dryly.

"I reckon it wouldn't have in time."

"The girl is still at the quarters?"

"Yes. But she wouldn't have been at the quarters much longer if Mr. Hungerford had lived."

This most interesting story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

HER FIRST ONION.

A little girl tackled her first green onion and took a huge bite of it. "Mamma, mamma!" she gasped, with tears streaming from her eyes, "gimme a drink of water, quick! This onion [illegible] my [illegible]elin's sumpfin awful."

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VALENTINE.

Never a bird in song
The white day long;
Never a sweet low trill
From the fettered rill;
And yet how song will stir
At the thought of her!

Never a glint of bloom
In the frosty gloom;
Never a leaf asway
In the brief gray day;
Yet all earth buds and blows
Where'er she goes!

Yea, she is song and flower
Thru each winter hour.
The glory and glamour and gleam
Of the vernal dream;—
Sweet, take this song of mine
For Valentine!

Clinton Scollard, in Life.

* * *

THE VALENTINE.

Bob stood first on one foot and then on the other, peering into the shop window with its marvelous display of every kind of valentine. His eyes twinkled with glee as he gazed upon a thrilling line of "comics."

"Gee whiz!" excitedly murmured Bob, thrusting his hand into his trousers pockets. Then his eyes lifted to higher things, and his heart strings tightened with positive awe. In the center of the window, suspended by a gilt cord, swung a creation of pink celluloid, paper lace, blue forget-me-nots and green sparrows. If only he could buy it for Mary Ann! His breath came and went in little gasps. On a scroll miraculously issuing from the mouth of one of the green sparrows were two lines of gilt lettering:

"As sure as the vine grows round the
stump,
You are my own dear sugar lump."

He gave an ecstatic whistle. Even the hard heart of Mary Ann, who scornfully winked the tip of her nose at his most adoring glances, could not possibly withstand poetry like that! He entered the shop.

He came out with a crestfallen air and drooping spirits. The pink celluloid valentine was fifty cents and poor Bob had only a nickel! He glared in at the window and then turned angrily away, walking slowly up the street, his dirty little forehead puckered in thought.

Had he only remembered in time that this was Valentine's Day he might have saved up enough coppers for even so dazzling an extravagance as the celluloid dream of beauty. But how could he instantly earn so vast a sum? The holidays with their opportunities to run errands were passed, and now, instead of a lucky blizzard with a lot of sidewalks to sweep, there was a fragrant warmth in the air this 14th of February, as if spring had sent a breath of her flowers to old winter for a valentine.

Bob glanced at a clock. It was too early to go for his evening papers. He turned up the alley leading to the "Grotto." For the first time in the last proud three months he was almost sorry that the gang had taken him in. Of course, after sleeping on shed roofs and burrowing under wharves a fellow lived like a swell in a fine cellar, but when he had paid Freckles—the gang's ten-year-old business manager—for his bunk and contributed his share of the daily grub his "regular income" was always exhausted. If only there could be some sensation in that afternoon's edition. Mary Ann might still—Bob's thoughts were abruptly interrupted by a cat's plaintiff cry.

"Hello, there!" exclaimed Bob. "Where in the world did you come from?" He stopped and stealthily stroked the rough fur of a forlorn kitten which had appeared as mysteriously as tho a trapdoor had suddenly opened in the ground for her special accommodation. "You are a beaut!" laughed Bob. "Just ought to see your ribs! Looks as if you'd been living on washboards all winter! What are you following me for? Take me for the avenue swell whose father keeps a dairy? I ain't got anything for you. Shoo!"

In terror the cat scampered behind an ash barrel and only the tip of an ear, one big yellow eye and a cobwebby whisker remained visible.

"Say, I didn't mean to scare you that way," apologized Bob, contritely kneeling by the barrel. "Come here kitty, kitty."

No poor alley cat—hungry for love as well as starving for food—could resist the beguiling note in Bob's coaxing voice, and little by little the kitten crawled out from its hiding place.

"You see, kit," explained Bob, gently stroking the thin little head, "I like cats—honest. But it would be worth all nine of your lives to follow me into the Grotto. You're terribly hungry, ain't you?"

"Meow! Meow!"

"Sorry, old girl, but I ain't a millionaire that can afford to dine stray alley cats at restaurants. Clean busted, except——" Bob's face flushed a sudden red. He had remembered the nickel.

He scrambled up, and scowled down at the kitten. "There's no use of your looking at me! A fellow can do what he pleases with his own money, and you needn't suppose for one instant I'm going to give up Mary Ann's valentine to feed an old alley cat!"

Emphatically jerking his head, Bob turned his back upon the two pleading, hungry eyes riveted upon him and took to his heels. But a glance over his shoulder was his undoing, for the cat, trying to run after him, toppled over from weakness, giving a cry that cut deep into Bob's tender heart.

The brave little pussy was soon on her feet again, and Bob stood looking down at her. The hand thrust into his trousers pocket turned the nickel over and over, and visions of the five-cent valentines he had recently scorned flashed thru his mind.

"What's the use of feeding you up just once when you'll go right off and get hungry again!" he grumbled.

"Meow! Me-o-w!"

"It's uncomfortable being hollow all the way down to your toes, I know," sighed Bob, "but——" The drooping corners of his mouth suddenly straightened into a smile reaching almost from ear to ear. "Got an idea!" he exultantly cried, waving his cap in the air. "I'll divvy, Kit, I'll divvy! Spend part of the nickel on you! part on Mary Ann—hurrah!"

A moment later Bob breathlessly entered a corner grocery.

"Give me two cents' worth of milk," he demanded in his most impressive manner as he wriggled on to a stool and spun his nickel on the counter.

"Where's your pail, sonny?"

Bob regarded the clerk in open mouthed consternation.

"Perhaps," said the clerk, chuckling over his own wit, "you'd like me to pour the milk into your pockets?"

"Couldn't—couldn't you loan me something?" stammered the embarrassed Bob. "I'd bring it back in ten minutes—honest."

A peal of laughter filled the little shop. "You don't catch old dogs with puppy tricks. I've loaned things to kids before. No, sir, you won't get a drop of milk from this establishment until you run home and fetch your pail."

Bob slowly descended from his stool. "Then it's off," he sighed. "I can't."

"Say," interrupted the clerk, actuated partly by his business keenness for trade, partly by the youngster's face, "I've got one of the finest tin pans you ever see. Your ma can have it for milk, fry her meat in it, and use it for a wash basin between times. It's worth every bit of ten cents, and this here little bump in its back don't amount to a hill of beans, but I'll let you have it, along with the milk, for your nickel. Is it a go, kid?"

Bob hesitated. A vision of Mary Ann in all the beauty of her red pigtails tied with pink tape and her dear freckled face, with its laughing brown eyes and scornful little nose, seemed to shine before him in a sort of golden haze. Then suddenly a plaintive cry rang in his [illegible] Mary [illegible]bered only a starved little alley cat and a starved street urchin, who, none too long ago, had often gone without food. Bob wriggled on to the stool again. "It's a go!" he said. A few minutes later he stood grinning down at the happy alley cat lapping the last drop of milk.

"Been having the time of your life, kit?" he asked.

Before the kitten could answer a shrill "Hello, Bob!" floated over his shoulder

He turned with a start and gazed at Mary Ann.

"Where did you get the milk?" she asked

"Grocery," replied the boy.

"Buy it with your own money?" Bob nodded.

"I like cats," murmured Mary Ann, for some strange reason bashfully hanging her head.

The crimson leaped from Bob's chin to his dirty little forehead. "Then, perhaps—perhaps," he excitedly faltered, "you'll let me give you the kitten for—for a valentine?"

"You mean it—honest?"

For his answer Bob gently lifted up the little alley cat and lovingly placed it in Mary Ann's eager, outstretched arms.

"Wait a minute—that ain't all," said Bob, and his voice quivered with pride. "I'm going to give you the pan, too, Mary Ann."

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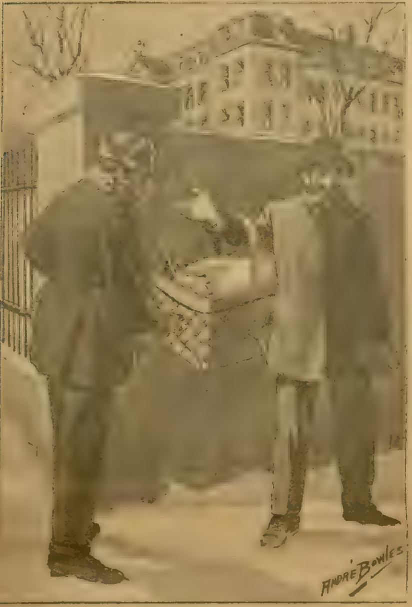
HICKMAN'S HAND-OUT

By Augustin Wilbur Breeden



"Found it in the doorway."

CURIOUS what a settlin' effect a kidlet will have on a man."

"Dope" Milligan stretched himself comfortably along a sill of the water tank, whose drippings made a cool green oasis in the grilling Sahara of railroad yards, and we other "bos" knew that one of his long-winded stories was coming. "Dope" is a philosopher as well as a great traveler and yarn-spinner, and this gives a certain flavor to his tales that makes them sound almost like "reel magazine stories," as the "Coney Island Kid" often puts it.

"Yes," continued "Dope," "a kid certainly does knock the rollers right out from under a man. There was Hickman, for instance; he was about as fond o' wet goods and rollin' stock as airy man I ever see; but a little blue-eyed cherub of a baby ditched him completely, and she wasn't even his'n.

"It happened this way: Hickman an' me had been skinnin' mules on a railroad job up in Kansas, an' we'd laid by a pretty neat little stake. Come the first little cold snap in the fall, we blowed out o' camp an' dropped down to the first sizable town, in search o' drinkables. Well, after some engineerin' we got 'em located, o' course, an' bein' as the weather was disagreeable, we stayed around some days. Then about three bells one morning a restaurant keeper give us a tip to fade away, sayin' that something blue an' brassy was movin' our way, an' that there was even then a rambler in the yards headed out. I recollect that I told him I wasn't afraid of airy member o' the blue fraternity I ever see, but I also recollect boostin' ole Hicksey into the end door of a sealed car, an' scramblin' in after him in the chill an' dewy dawn.

"How long we laid in that car we never knowed, as the novelists say. The first next thing I was conscious of was a kind o' gentle, everlastin' murmurin' an' rockin' that left me guessin' whether I was abroad on summer seas in the fo'c'sle of a Pacific tramp or in a hammock under my ole mother's cherry trees listenin' to the buzzin' o' bees an' the chatter o' blue jays. But the more awake I got the more I decided that I wasn't in no sort o' poetical surroundin's, but just in a plain, prosaic grain car, an' it about the coldest grain car I ever see. I was so numb I couldn't 'a' told my legs from Hickman's to save my life; an' thirsty—well, I guess you fellers know the feelin'. I reached over and swatted Hickman a few times in the ribs, an' he set up an' begin to make inquiries as to our whereabouts. I told him we was in a car loaded with loose wheat, as he could perhaps guess by the cake o' dust in his throat, but that I was not [illegible] as to the geographical situation [illegible].

"[illegible] crawled over to the [illegible] door, where the wind was comin' in [illegible] the rate of thirty-three an' a half below zero, an' tried to survey the landscape. It [illegible] early or pretty late [illegible] couldn't tell which, and on [illegible] an' miles o' piny w[illegible] I mutt[illegible] I reckon,' says Hickman, shiverin'.

"Just then the rambler we're on comes to a halt, an' we hears a shack trottin' along the cinder path. We [illegible] just as he comes [illegible] Hello, where'd you fellers [illegible] Hickman, 'but kin [illegible] where we are at [illegible]

"[illegible]y South,' says the brake[illegible] 'can't you tell by the weather?'

"'But what's the day o' the week?' I ventures to ask.

"'Friday,' says 'e.

"'Friday, the whath?' asks Hickman.

"'Mornin' or evenin'?' I puts in.

"'Aw, fade away!' says the shack. 'Do you take me for an information bureau? An' listen!' says 'e, after lookin' us over agin: 'you bos stay right here in this berg an' don't you try to ride this train out; d'ye hear?'

"We heared, but we had no inclination to stay in a strange city amongst cold an' heartless strangers, when there was a rambler standin' there waitin' to take on coal an' water an' carry us to warmer climes. We calculated that we could just about pick up a few eatables an' wet our throats by the time she was ready to move on ag'in; so we started up what looked like a side street, keepin' our eyes peeled for likely lookin' back doors. About this time it begins to sleet an' rain. There wasn't a half a dozen people stirrin' in the streets; but thick smoke was pourin' from a good many chimneys, by which we guessed that it was a. m. instead of p. m., as we had halfway believed.

"Well, we'd gone about three blocks, when we come to a high iron fence with a gate at the corner.

"'Convent,' says Hickman, 'now for a hand-out. You wait here in the alley while I go in an' give 'em the hard-luck dope.'

"I waits about a jiffy an' a half, an' then back trots ole Hicksey with a basket on his arm.

"'Found it in the doorway,' says 'e, out o' breath, 'an' not a soul around. You hike for the car, Dope, an' be ready to take it up; I'll be there by the time the train gits under headway.'

"While he was speakin' I noticed that the basket was all tucked in with white napkins an' things, an' that a tall green-necked bottle was stickin' out at one end. I paused just long enough to drink the water that had collected in my hat brim, an' then I obeyed orders.

"Once inside the wheat car again, an' the shack nowhere to be seen, we sort o' had time to look around a little an' congratulate ourselves.

"'Luck, I hope,' says Hickman, fixin' to sample the long green bottle. 'Here's to the good father this was probably intended for!' But the next minute I see he was disgusted. 'Milk!' says 'e, lowerin' the bottle an' makin' a face, 'but it's wet anyway want some?'

"Before I had time to answer the thing happened; that basket come alive. The white towels an' napkins begin to work up an' down, an' there was a little whimperin' noise that might 'a' been made by anything from a pup to a pet lamb.

"'This is the worst ever!' says Hickman, thinkin' he had the willies. 'I've seen cream-colored snakes an' baby-blue alligators before now, but this goes out by all of 'em.'

"About this time the fuss in the basket dies down, an' the car bein' still pretty dark, I strikes a match to see whether we've both got 'em or not. I reckon we struck a good many matches between us before we could make up our minds to believe what we saw. There in that basket was one o' the prettiest little blinkin', blue-eyed babies I ever see in all my life.

"'The great-an'-original jumpin' Je-

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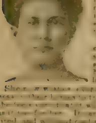

She also tried this remedy [illegible] It was [illegible] every case. [illegible] has touched [illegible]

She [illegible] remedy for [illegible] A[illegible] you have to do is write her a letter asking her how she cured her husband of drinking [illegible] As she has nothing to [illegible] simply send a letter [illegible] Mrs. Margaret Anderson at the address given above, taking care to write your name and full address plainly.

(We earnestly advise every one of our readers who wishes to cure a dear one of drunkenness to write to this lady today. Her offer is a sincere one.)

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hoshaphat!' says Hickman; an' with that he fell over in the wheat, an' I thought he was goin' to die. He 'd laugh a while, an' then he 'd shake his head as mournful as a deakon an' ask me what we was goin' to do.

"'You kidnaped the kid,' says I, 'so I reckon you'd better take the responsibility of sayin' what's the next move'

"'Well, I am a chump!' says 'e. 'I ought to be made the walkin' boss o' the kidnapers' union. Why didn't that blame shack tell us that this was a country where they kep' babies in their lunch baskets an' where it wasn't safe to snatch a canvas ham for fear it 'd turn out to be a pair o' twins?'

"But the fun o' the situation was soon over with; an' we begin to realize that unless we acted pretty lively the plot might begin to thicken faster than we was lookin' for. I questioned old Hicksey pretty close as to just how the basket was when he found it, an' he said it was in a deep doorway, an' had been covered up with a piece of oilcloth, but the wind had blowed it off. It seemed pretty evident from this that the kid was a foundling, brought to the convent by some one early that morning. If that was the case, it might not be missed at all, an' we would be safe enough, unless the person that brought it was lurkin' around an' seen us carry it off.

"While we was figurin' all this out the kid begin to cry ag'in, an' Hickman, rummagin' in the basket, found a nursin' bottle about half empty an' filled it up with milk an' give it to the little scoundrel. 'You pore little innocent rat, you,' he kep' sayin', 'it's a dirty shame the way they done you—to leave you out in the rain!'

"I see right then that Hickman was a-takin' to that kid mighty strong; an' the way the little bald-headed shaver cottoned up to him was a holy fright. The first thing I knowed it had its little knot up ag'in his shoulder an' one of its little paws clean inside his ole dirty flannel shirt.

"'Here, Dope,' he says to me, 'pull off your coat an' wrap it round the little 'un. If I move I might wake it up ag'in.' An' the first thing I knowed, he was rockin' back an' forth in the wheat an' a-singin' like a mother with nine children:

"'Little red caboose,
[illegible]
Little red caboose behind this train'

"There's ninety-nine verses in that song; but before ole Hickman had warbled three of 'em, that brat was sound asleep.

"'Perhaps there's a note or something in the basket?' says I, an' begin to search. Sure enough there was a note pinned to a ten-dollar william. It read something like this:

"'Dear Sister Felicia:

"'Please take good care of the inclosed infant. It is the child of an unfortunate girl which I have the Christian privilege of protectin' in distress She doesn't know that the child is livin', as she has been out of her head with fever up to two days ago. I have furnished the little darlin' with plenty of clothes for a while, and am leavin' a little money with it. My husband an' I are simply passin' thru your town on our way to the Gulf Coast, where we will keep the pore girl till spring; but I know your convent and how kind you are an' do not hesitate to leave the child in your care. When we return we will give you a liberal donation.

"'Your friend an' oldtime pupil.

"'GUESS WHO.'

"'Ahem,' says I, 'somebody big rich, playin' the good Samaritan to her servant girl, eh. I tell you what, Hicksey, you mother it up till spring and git that handsome reward she mentions.'

"'Dope, you're a fool!' says 'e in reply. 'My reward would be hard labor an' the chilly bars. No, I've got a scheme for gittin' out o' this thing; I'll play the young widower on the strength of those ten bucks till I can git a chance to sneak the kid back to the convent, an' then we'll make our gitaway from this portion of the globe for true. Still, it's a dirty shame for the pore girl not to know her kid's livin'. If I knowed her address, I'd put her wise, if it cost me ten years.'

"I see then that Hickman's gittin' dippy about the kid, an' I knows it's no use to argue. So I gives him my hat, which was better 'an his'n, an' my pants; an' the first time the train stops, I gits off an' buys him a hard-boiled shirt with a collar an' cuffs attached. I likewise gits a bottle o' Syrup o' Figs, not knowin' when the kid may take the colic in that cold wheat car. I found out while I was off that it was only about ten miles further to a main line junction where dozens o' trains stopped ever' day; an' we decided that that was the place for ole Hicksey to start his 'baggage-coach-ahead' game.

"He hustled into his new rig; an' as luck would have it, our train headed in just as a long passenger come pullin' in from the south. Hickman went right over the steps o' the passenger an' onto the depot platform, right along with the rest o' the people that's gittin' off. I stands off at a little distance to see the thing well done, while he saunters into the depot as cool an' casual as the president o' the road.

"Well, sir, ole Hickman didn't no more than git inside the waitin'-room till two or three women was makin' friends to the baby an' askin' him questions. An' that feller proved to be an artist at lyin'. It wasn't five minutes till he was givin' them women a deathbed story that would 'a' run an undertaker into hysterics o' grief. He just made one mistake; he got mixed up once or twice on the gender o' the kid; but as it happened, the ladies was so excited an' sympathetic that they never did notice it. Finally he got one ole lady that had five of 'er own to look after, to nurse his'n, too; while he sachayed across the tracks to the barber shop an' bathed an' got a shave an' haircut, an' come back lookin' so spry I didn't hardly know 'im.

"By this time I was beginnin to envy ole Hicksey a little; an' when he marched boldly across to the only hotel in the place an' walked right in at the front door as if he was goin' to register an' stay for dinner, I felt as if he was overdoin' the thing a little. It's true he'd give me a half-a-dollar out o' the ten, to sort o' eat on while waitin' developments; still I didn't like to see him tryin' to play the swell. But that hotel keeper had an eye in his head; I reckon he could see the hobo in a man thru any sort o' veneer, for as soon as Hickman come into the office—so I learns afterwards—he up an' asks him if he's lookin' for a job, sayin' he needs a man to do odd jobs around the place an' meet the trains at night.

"Hickman explained to him that he was a fresh widower an' had a baby over at the station that he was takin' to his ole mother, but that he was about broke an' would like to have the position if only there was some way o' takin' care o' the kid till he could send it on. ' He explained that he had just come over to the hotel to try to buy some warm milk for it. Then the landlady, who's been a-listenin' to the talk kind o' unconcerned, pricks up her ears an' asks Hickman several questions about the age, size, an' pedigree o' the child; finally she tells him to bring it right over.

"When I see Hickman a-hustlin' back an' bringin' the kid, I drops round to a side door o' the hotel kind o' casual-like as if I was goin' to rap for a hand-out, an' listens to the talk goin' on inside. 'Oh, the little angel!' says the big, fat landlady. 'What did you say its name was?'

"'Well,' says Hickman, hemmin' an' hawin', 'I ain't exactly named it yet. You see its mother dyin' so suddenly kind o' upset things.'

"'Boy or girl?' the landlord butts in. Then Hicksey begins to hem an' haw right. He's about to say 'boy,' when the landlady, evidently not seein' his confusion, says: 'W'y it's a girl, o' course, Mr. Thomas; any one could see that with half an eye.' An' old Hickman says: 'Yes, it's a girl; I didn't notice what you asked.'

"At this I have palpitation o' the heart an' seem to see the bottom droppin' out o' things, for I've had a feelin' in my bones all along that the kid's a boy; an' I knowed that if it's found out against Hickman that he don't know the gender of his own baby, he'll be took up on suspicion sure. I gathers from the talk that the landlady has got a kid of her own about four months old, an' that she don't mind takin' care o' two while she's about it. Well, to make a long story short, the arrangements is made an' Hicksey is hired on the spot, for six dollars a week an' board for two.

"That evening I strolls up alongside my ole pal as he's goin' about his chores, an' he slips me a couple o' bucks an' tells me to hang around, sayin' that we'd take a passenger and go up the line as soon as the weather moderated a little so that we could deposit the kid without danger of it freezin'. Well, sir, I loafs around a whole week, an' still he don't make no move to go. Then I sees him an' he shoves me a V an' tells me to drop up the line an' wait another week. I do as he says; only I wait two weeks instead o' one; still he don't make no move. Finally I hobos back an' inquires what's up.

"'Lookee here, Dope,' he says, 'I'm gitting attached to that little blue-eyed rat. Mrs. Thomas here, the landlady, has "daddied" me an' talked to me an' pushed the kid at me, till I've got to wishin' I was its dad. W'y she's got the little dickens to where it sleeps with me, with both its little paws inside my undershirt.'

"I tried to argue with Hickman, an' told him all the varieties of fool he was; but the more I argued the more set he was on stayin' on a few weeks longer, as he put it. 'Dope,' says 'e, in a sort o' patronizin' tone, 'let me find you a job round here thru the winter. These people here at the hotel are the best ever; w'y Mrs. Thomas here just reminds me o' my ole mother. She's mighty near reformed me, Dope; I ain't seen a drop o' liquor since I come here. Le's both hang round here till spring; then we'll slip the kid back to the sisters an' hike.'

"I told him again what I thought of a man that 'ud turn himself into a bloomin' orphan asylum, but it was no use to argue; he simply had took root. So, not likin' to desert a crazy an, I got work on the section an' stayed on. An' reely, before spring I got to likin' the youngster myself. She had about the prettiest blue eyes an' about the bluest ones I ever see—yes, it was a her all right enough—an' she cozened up to ole Hickman as if she was his own flesh an' blood. Him an' Mrs. Thomas had named her Nell, but Hicksey an' me always called her 'the hand-out' when talkin' to one another.

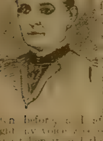
"Now what do you reckon happened? Come spring, I tried my levelest to git that idiot to return the baby, knowin' that ole Mrs. Richlady would be hikin' back from her winter hang-out and would be droppin' in on the sisters to see how the kid was progressin'. But he kep' hangin' on at the hotel day after day, makin' first one excuse an' then another. Then one night sure enough in rolls a walkin' fashion-plate, lookin' like a cross between a new-made bride an' a lady drummer. She comes over to the hotel, turns up her nose at everything, an' takes a room between trains.

"'Ah, what an interesting baby!' she says, lookin' at 'the hand-out.' 'Eyes of such heavenly blue!'

"'Yes,' says Hicksey, not scentin' who she is, 'yes, she's jes' like her pore dead mother.'

"The lady took the baby up, holdin'

WHAT MANY ILLINOIS FOLKS SAY.



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it out from her pongee coat something like you would a wet rag. 'Ah!' she says; an' then she swollered a couple o' times and didn't say anything more. Hickman looked at me an' me at him, much as to say, 'The jig's up!'

"The lady looked at the kid a long time without a word. Finally she sort o' sighed an' said: 'Queer little birthmark on the child's neck—looks like a weddin' ring.'

"If that birthmark had been the judge's seal on ole Hicksey's death warrant he couldn't 'a' looked more solemn at that moment. None of us had ever noticed it before, leastwise none of us menfolks, but it was pretty plain to me that the fashion-plate had seen the kid an' the birthmark before. As soon as I can I goes over an' glances at the hotel register, an' there she is registered from Bay Saint Louis, on the Gulf, you know.

"While the rest are eatin' supper, me an' Hickman holds a council o' war; we decides to lay low, thinkin' per'aps we're scared up over nothin'. But after supper the lady buttonholes Mrs. Thomas, while Hicksey an' me lays our heads to the stove-pipe hole in the room above.

"'Have you seen anything of a good-lookin' but forlorn-appearin' girl about 19 years old comin' thru here goin' north?' she asks.

"'No,' says Mrs. Thomas.

"'No?' says the lady, sayin' the word like it was a question. 'Now that's strange, because she left Bay Sawng Lou-ee about two weeks ago, an' would 'a' changed here. I doubt if she had money enough to git this far, but I can't believe she's walkin'. But there's another question I want to ask you. Who is this Hickman that has the blue-eyed baby?'

"'Dunno,' says the landlady. 'A good man, I reckon. He come here last fall just after he lost his wife. Ah, but he was a pitiful sight; so tore up that he didn't hardly know whether the baby was a boy er a girl.'

"'Where'd he come from?' butts in the lady, sharp as tacks.

"'Well now reelly, I don't believe he ever tole me,' says Mrs. Thomas. 'He said he had started to take the baby to his ole mother, but he never did mention her name ag'in after he settled down here.'

"'Very—well!' says the fashion-plate, mighty precise.

"'But I know he's a good man,' says Mrs. Thomas, 'an' I won't stand fer nobody to knock——'

"'Veree—well!' says the fashion-plate again, an' tho I couldn't see her face I knowed her lips had come together like a pair o' mule shears.

"About two minutes later she sachays down to the office an' writes a telegram to be sent to the mother superior of our convent, an' hands it to Mr. Thomas. 'Here you,' she says, 'send this to the telegraph office fer me an' wait fer an answer, but don't let that man Hickman take it.'

Mr. Thomas hands it to me, an' I strolls across the tracks with it as slow as possible. Before I goes into the office I starts to read it, but I sees her standin' in the door watchin' me, an' Hickman an' Mr. Thomas dodgin' about in the lamplight as if they was her prisoners. So I hikes on into the telegraph office, feelin' about as desperate as a man ever did. But inside I opens it an' reads it. It is addressed to Sister Felicia, askin' her if she has a certain little blue-eyed, birth-marked girl, an' givin' the date of her delivery. Well, I gases with the man at the key as casual as my thumpin' heart will let me for about twenty minutes; then I takes up a receivin' blank, an' pretendin' to be jes' scribblin' fer pastime, writes as follows:

"'Foundling found dead on doorstep morning of November 7 last. Must be the child you refer to.'

"I hustled back to her with this, with my knees a-tremblin'. She jes' glanced at it an' throwed it down without even readin' it.

"'That's a forgery!' she shouts. 'No telegraph operator wrote that; w'y I could read it right off.'

"That punctured me. I dropped into a chair an' passed it up to Hickman. She turned and lit in on him. 'Mr. Hickman,' she says, 'what you wanted with that child you have here I don't know. Its mother is my proteshay; I am its godmother. An' if you're not its father—which I know you're not—then you're a kidnaper, an' I'm goin' to have my husband send you to the State prison. Now sir, explain!'

"I thought sure ole Hickman would throw up the sponge right there; but sir, he bristled right up to her.

"'So you want me to explain, huh?' says 'e. 'All right, Mrs. Good-Samaritan, you kidnaped this youngster first, took it away unbeknownst to its pore mother, an' carried it an' left it on a doorstep in the rain an' cold. It didn't freeze to death, but that wasn't because you protected it—it was because I took it an' fed it an' kep' it warm. Me an' Mrs. Thomas here has been takin' care of it ever since.'

"While he was speakin' the landlady had slipped out an' brought the child in, an' she was lookin' first at one an' then another, blinkin' her blue eyes as if the light hurt em.

"'You call yourself a Christian, I'll bet,' went on Hickman, when he'd took breath. 'I reckon you think what you done was a Christian deed, but I'll bet the pore kid's mother could give you cards an' spades an' beat you to Heaven. To rob a pore girl of her baby while she was out of her head! You ought to—well, I won't say what ought to be done to you! But I'll tell you one thing!' an' with that he started off ag'in on a new tack, an' such a larrupin' as he give her I never heard. I guess he'd 'a' kep' it up till midnight if nothin' hadn't happened to stop 'im.

"While he was scorchin' her we all suddenly noticed that they was an extra person in the room, a girl in a has-been hat an' dress, with a bundle under her arm an' the shoes droppin' off of her feet. Her eyes an' mouth was standin' so wide open an' she was so pale that I first thought it was a dead woman come alive. Finally Hickman saw which way we was all lookin' an' looked around. Then he steadied himself by the cigar case an' said: 'Nellie, Nellie Hodges, is that you?'

"'Yes,' says she, 'yes, I'm glad you know me—I'm glad you're willin' to speak to me, tho I ain't fitten to speak to. An', oh, Mr. Hickman, you saved my baby, didn't you? You was always so good to me when I was a little kid; an' I was always pokin' fun at you an' thinkin' myself above you; an' now I'm down an' out an' you're takin' up fer me. I'm clean tuckered; my money give out, an' I walked a hundred miles to see this little darlin'!' An' here she grabbed the baby up an' begin to go into hysterics over it.

"'Give me the name o' the man!' says Hickman. 'I'll foller the low-down cur till I——'

"'Oh, please don't say that!' says the girl. 'He's dead. He would 'a' married me if he'd lived another week. It was his parents an' her,' pointin' to the rich lady, 'her that called herself my friend—they're the ones that kep' him from it!'

"We was all turnin' to tell Madame Fashion-plate what we thought of her, when she grabs up her grips an' fades away. She set in the depot four hours that night rather than stay at our hotel.

"Well, after the seance I witnessed that night I knowed it was only a matter of time till Hicksey an' the girl would be gittin' into double harness; so I hikes out the next day an' leaves it with 'em. It seems she was a girl raised up in Hickman's home town, an' that he had always had a fancy for 'er; tho him bein' so much older than her an' such a scaly ole horn-toad, she never had cared much for 'im.

"Well, six months passed by, an' then I got an invite to their weddin'—found my sign an' a weddin' ring an' date cut on a tank down on the B. an' O. Hoboken Bob had put that stamp on about half the tanks in the Eastern States before he finally caught me. Say, that was a swell weddin'; I wasn't sorry I hoboed halfway across the United States to see it.

"Where's Hickman now. Oh, he's got a job, brakin' on the Katy. They've got three kidlets now, an' got their little home nearly paid out. Hickman's been strictly on the water wagon now for the last five years. I tell you, kids an' women certainly do have a settlin' influence on a man."

❦ ❦ ❦

The Cold Bath.

"There is nothing so conducive to health," said Bingen, "as a cold bath upon getting up in the morning."

"It is getting a little late in the season for that kind of talk," answered Dodget. "The cold-bath-in-the-morning and sleeping-porch man always seems like a nature faker to me when the mornings begin to get crinkly.

"In the summer it is all very well, but in the winter it is a very poor arrangement. If my doctor prescribed a cold bath for me every morning upon arising I wouldn't get up at all, not until afternoon anyway.

"And it taxes my credulity to hear a man talk about cold baths. He goes into the bathroom and fools around and comes out, saying 'B-r-r-r!' and leaves a wet towel to look as if he had taken a bath. But did he?

"I used to believe in the cold bath myself, but we had steam-heated rooms, and a cool bath can be taken in those circumstances. But when I went out into the country one winter and found they didn't have any kind of heat in the morning, and when I got up and gazed into the muzzle of a pitcher of ice, then I began to lose faith in the cold-bath habit. I tell you, I found that under those circumstances a fellow is doing mighty well to do any kind of bathing at all.

"Don't tell me that any one takes a cold bath in winter and likes it. I know that is impossible. Of course people like it after it is over, and when they don't have to do it again for a whole day.

"My friend Silver used to take a cold bath every morning. First he would put one toe in the water and take it out and dry it, and then he would put another toe in the water and dry it. That's the way he bathed in cold water. One day I happened to see him just when he had finished his bath. I had drunk some water, and there was a little left in the tumbler, so I thought it no harm to toss a little on Silver. Knowing that he had just emerged from a cold bath a few seconds before, I didn't think the little bit of water left in the glass would hurt him.

"You should have heard him howl. He hadn't had that much cold water on him since August. It nearly killed him! Since then I haven't had much faith in people's taking cold baths, not in the winter time."

A LAMP WITHOUT A WICK.

The [illegible] Co., 835 Factory Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., has a new portable gasoline lamp which gives the most powerful home light in the world—a blessing to every home not equipped with [illegible] 300 Candle Power [illegible] This remarkable lamp has no wick and no [illegible] they can refer new [illegible] advantage of their [illegible] Agents wanted [illegible]

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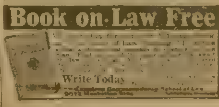
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DO YOU GET UP WITH A LAME BACK?

Have You Rheumatism, Kidney, Liver or Bladder Trouble?

Pain or dull ache in the back is often evidence of kidney trouble. It is Nature's timely warning to show you that the track of health is not clear.

Danger Signals.

If these danger signals are unheeded more serious results may be expected, kidney trouble in its worst form may steal upon you.

Thousands of people have testified that the mild and immediate effect of Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder remedy is soon realized—that it stands the highest for its remarkable curative effect in the most distressing cases. If you need a medicine, you should have the best.

Lame Back.

Lame back is only one of many symptoms of kidney troubles. Other symptoms showing that you may need Swamp-Root are, being subject to embarrassing and frequent bladder troubles day and night, irritation, sediment, etc.

Lack of control, smarting, uric acid, dizziness, indigestion, sleeplessness, nervousness, sometimes the heart acts badly, rheumatism, bloating, lack of ambition, may be loss of flesh, sallow complexion.

Prevalency of Kidney Disease.

Most people do not realize the alarming increase and remarkable prevalency of kidney disease. While kidney disorders are among the most common diseases that prevail, they are sometimes the last recognized by patients, who very often content themselves with doctoring the effects, while the original disease may constantly undermine the system.

Sample Size Bottle.

Regular fifty-cent and one-dollar size bottles at all drug stores.

Don't make any mistake, but remember the name, Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, and the address, Binghamton, N. Y., which you will find on every bottle.

SPECIAL NOTE—You may obtain a sample size bottle of Swamp-Root by enclosing ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y. This gives you the opportunity to prove the remarkable merit of this medicine. They will also send you a book of valuable information, containing many of the thousands of grateful letters received from men and women who say they found Swamp-Root to be just the remedy needed in kidney, liver and bladder troubles. The value and success of Swamp-Root are so well known that our readers are advised to send for a sample size bottle. Address Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y. Be sure to say you read this offer in the Chicago Ledger.

Brutal.

Old Maid (showing rare coins)—"This coin was made in 1790."

The Brute—"Why didn't you spend it when it was new?"

Oh, the Worm.

"Last night my wife told me what she thought of me."

"And what did you do?"

"[illegible]"

HIS SAD VALENTINE'S DAY

The Unexpected.

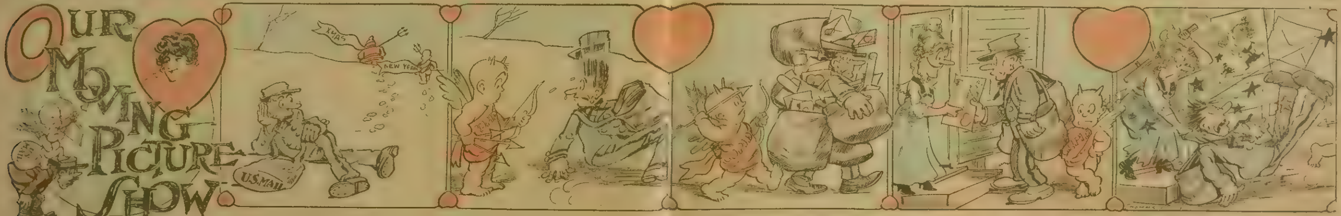
Hobo—"Say, gimme a dime for a bite to eat?"

Smart Citizen—"Can you change a twenty?"

Knocked Out.

Museum Manager—"Where's the hu-[illegible]"

Attendant—"Can't perform today. His wife's been swatting him."



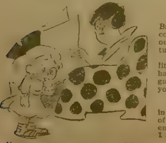
Letter Carrier—"Well, now that those two fellows with their prods are gone, I'll have a chance to take it a little easier."

Dan Cupid—"Say, you! Don't you know that th[illegible] is Valentine's Day? Come on now, and get [illegible] Your load is ready!

"Go to it, old dr[illegible] break the speed limit now before I stick another arrow into your hide!"

Miss Oldgirl—"Oh, thank you, Mr. Postman! A nice large valentine from some handsome young man who has been smitten with my charms, no doubt!

"You old wretch, look at that hideous valentine! If you ever dare set foot in my yard again I'll pull your hair out by the roots! The idea of bringing me such a looking thing!"



[illegible] was the only man you [illegible]

A Bad Habit.

"By the way, Mrs. Popkins," remarked the vicar after the service, "I was extremely sorry to see your husband leave the church in the middle of my sermon. I trust nothing was seriously the matter with him?"

"Oh, no, sir," replied Mrs. Popkins "It was nothin' very serious; but you see, sir, the poor man do have a terrible 'abit o' walkin' in 'is sleep"

Changeable.

"Well, old chap, do you think Miss Van Billion intends to buy you?" asked the first duke.

"My deah boy, I really cawn't tell, don't you know? Some days I think she does, then at other times, old top, I fear she is merely shopping," replied the second duke.

He Thought of Her.

There was trouble in the nursery. Baby Enid was howling, and mother couldn't soothe her. At last she found out the cause of the disturbance and turned irately on Johnny.

"You don't mean to say you greedy little boy," she demanded, "that you have eaten all those sweets grandma gave you, and never even thought of your little sister?"

Johnny looked hurt.

"Oh, yes, I did think of her," he said, in an aggrieved voice. "I was thinking of her all the time, and I was frightened that she would see them before I ate them all!"

Gently Broken.

A young man, an only son, married against the wishes of his parents. A short time afterward, in telling a friend how to break the news to them, he said

"Start off by telling them that I am dead, and then gently work up to the [illegible]"

A Tip From Sister.

Jack—"I'm in a quandary, sis. I want to propose to Mabel, but I'm not sure she'd accept me."

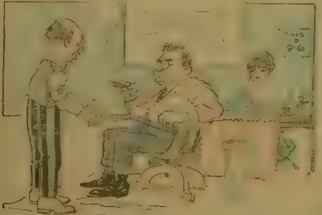
His Sister (who knows)—"Jack, you're like the letter 'b'—in doubt when there's no need of it"

Acting for the Movies.

"Now you must move your mouth when the pictures are being taken, and you are supposed to be speaking"

"But I don't know anything to say"

"Well, then, chew gum"



The Boss—"Ain't it enough that I save your life?"

The Bookkeeper—"What do you mean, save my life?"

The Boss—"If I gave you the raise you're asking for you'd drop dead"

Merely to Serve.

During a particularly nasty dust storm at one of the camps an English recruit ventured to seek shelter in the sacred precincts of the cook's domain.

After a time he broke an awkward silence by saying to the cook:

"If you put the lid on that camp kettle you would not get so much of the dust in your soup."

The irate cook glared at the intruder, and then broke out

"See here, me lad. Your business is to serve your country."

"Yes," interrupted the recruit, "but not to eat it."

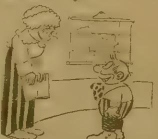
Putting It Up to Father.

After several unsuccessful attempts to draw her husband into conversation at the restaurant the wife discovered the cause of his abstraction to be a beautiful girl dressed in black and seated at a nearby table.

"An attractive widow," observed the wife, coolly

"Yes, indeed, a very attractive widow," agreed the husband, enthusiastically.

"Yes," sighed the wife. "I wish I w[illegible]"



"Albert, do you know what wind is?"

"Yes, ma'am; wind is air that's in a hurry"

Cleared a Very Little.

A general was once staying at the house of an elderly maiden lady in the country, who wanted more of his company than he was willing to give. Proposing one day to take a stroll with him, he excused himself on account of the badness of the weather. Shortly afterward she caught him sneaking out alone

"So, General," said she, "it has cleared up?"

"Just a little, ma'am—enough for one, but not enough for two!"

Objected to Paying Twice.

"Look here, waiter. Eighty cents is an outrageous price for a portion of as-[illegible]"

"Yes, sir, but you see, sir, we're putting on a very expensive cabaret show, and [illegible]"

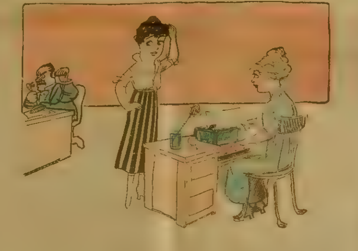
"I know all about the cabaret show. I paid for that with the soup."

Within Her Rights.

A woman mounted the steps of the elevated station carrying an umbrella like a reversed saber. An attendant touched her lightly, saying:

"Excuse me, madam, but you are likely to put out the eye of the man behind you."

"Well, he's my husband!" she snapped.



Edith—"They say Belle's boss is very profane!"

Miss Stryker—"Yes—how the poor girl can stand his profanity at that salary is more than I can imagine!"

Not at All Sick.

The ocean liner was rolling like a chip, but as usual in such instances one passenger was aggressively, disgustingly healthy.

"Sick, eh?" he remarked to a pale-green person who was leaning on the rail

The pale-green person regarded the healthy one with all the scorn he could muster

"Sick nothing!" he snorted weakly. "I'm just hanging over the front of the boat to see how the captain cranks it!"—Puck.

Acting in One Lesson.

"Do you think I could learn to be a moving-picture actor?"

"Sure you could. Just remember this one thing. A heaving chest denotes surprise, fear, hate, or any other emotion."

Losing His Ground.

"The Rev. Mr. Knight worked hard to convert the members of his flock."

"Yes, and then he went on a three months' vacation, and now he's got his work to do all over again."

Courageous.

"That woman is afraid of nothing."

"Dauntless, eh?"

"Positively. She'd even marry a man to reform him."

Greatness and Efficiency.

"A great man's mind is superior to [illegible]," remarked the philosopher.

"Yes," remarked the ordinary person; "it is if he's great enough to get what he goes after instead of having to see some one else walk off with it."

Confession.

First Co-ed—"I kissed Bob last night!"

[illegible]—"Is that right?"

First Squab—[illegible] but it's [illegible]

A Safe Bet.

The moving pictures of a train wreck were startlingly realistic.

"Who do you suppose that man is who is running with all his might toward the disaster?" asked one spectator of a companion.

"I am not sure," replied the other, "but I'll bet a cookie it is a damage suit lawyer." Judge.

Rather Discouraging.

"Well, Twobbie, how are you getting along in politics?"

"Can't say that I'm making much progress."

"No."

"I've climbed into half a dozen political band wagons and every one of them broke down before I'd traveled far enough to reach an office."

The Test.

Medium—"The spirit of your wife is here now; do you wish to speak to her [illegible]"

Widower—"Ask her where the dickens she put my summer underwear."

He Couldn't Tell.

"Hello, Bill. I hear you're just out of the hospital after undergoing an operation. Was it a serious one?"

"I don't know yet. The surgeon hasn't presented his bill."

Tush, Tush!

She—"What a lovely view!"

He—"I'd like it better if you turned your face this way."

Henry Didn't Eat Cake.

She was a very recent bride, and endeavoring to keep house in the approved hygienic manner. Entering a strange bakery one day, she saw a huge cat put his paws on the low show windows and vault lightly in among the cakes.

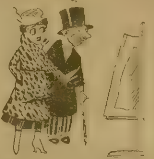
"Oh, look!" she exclaimed to the stout lady in charge. "Your cat."

"Dat is all right," soothingly replied the wide lady, with a wider smile. "Dat is Henery. He will not eat anything; he chust schniffs 'em."

He Got Them Mixed.

A Missouri farmer had ordered a fancy pig from a breeder. The pig was a mere mite of a pig, and the farmer sent it back

"Dear sir," he wrote. "From the comparative size of the pig and the bill, I am forced to the conclusion that you got them mixed. You should have sent the pig by mail and the bill by express"



Why does Daubber draw so much from the nude?"

"So he can paint women in the modern gowns."

The Name Was Correct.

In New York a new teacher found that a little negro girl was named Fertilizer Johnson.

"Are you sure that Fertilizer is your right name?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," replied the little girl.

"Well, tell your mother to come here," said the teacher

The mother came the next day.

"Yas, Fertilizer is right," she said "You see, I named her after her father and mother both. Her father's name is Ferdinand and my name is Liza, so we called her Fertilizer"

Sailed on the Websterian.

The bank cashier, disguised, was boarding the steamer with his loot when he noticed a man standing by the rail who looked like a detective

"Do you think that when he sees me on the seas he will seize me?" he asked of his accomplice

"I apprehend you need not apprehend that he will apprehend you," responded the other, comfortingly

The Return Invitation.

One young man met another, a friend of his, and to do the proper thing invited him to a French dinner. Everything was served in good style, but the different courses were dished up in very small portions

At its conclusion, the one who had extended the invitation, and who was perfectly accustomed to the general style of the restaurant, said:

"Pretty good meal that, for a dollar, eh?"

"Yes," responded his friend, who was still hungry, "first rate! Now you have one with me."

Not Committing Himself.

The centenarian was being eagerly interviewed by reporters, and was asked, among other things, to what he attributed his long life and good health

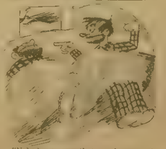
"Well," the old man replied slowly, "I'm not in any position to say right now. You see, I've been bargaining with two or three of them patent medicine concerns for a couple of weeks, but I ain't quite decided yet."

Moved to Pity.

"What excuse have you for not supporting your family?" asked the judge, in stentorian tones.

"I have to support a motor car," pleaded the culprit

And the judge, knowing how it was himself, gave him a dollar for some gasoline.



"Nobody can say that you have a submarine face."

"W[illegible] de answer?"

"It's never under de water."

He Has Women Folk.

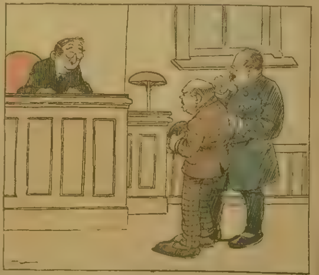
"Now, this car of yours," said the slangy person. "It looks all right, but [illegible] ere?"

"[illegible]," replied the intermittent motorist. "Here, there, and everywhere. I don't get a chance to ride in it more than once or twice a week.

Insidious Sneer.

"Seth Smiggles says you are another Daniel Webster."

"Yes," replied Senator Sorghum; "Seth is always comparing me with somebody who is dead"



Judge—"Officer, this man says he was not intoxicated, but was suffering from vertigo."

Officer—"Perhaps he was, your honor, but everybody else was suffering from th' funny songs he was singing"

SCORCHED GIRL-MOTHS

Or, Charmed by the Prince of Hearts

By B. S. Saunier

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Begun in No. 4, January 23. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news[illegible] agents, or by mail from [illegible]

CHAPTER IX.

Y[illegible] call it mesmerism if you like, and you may think with reason that Violet was hypnotized by her admirer, the Prince of Hearts, altho he had no notion of anything be[illegible]ing himself with the play[illegible] so very handy and [illegible] tempting. Or you might think [illegible] heart of a girl began pounding [illegible] her eardrums and the blood of it began ra[illegible] thru her veins like ting[illegible] it was very likely to set [illegible] in a whirl. It was likely to [illegible] tremendous a call straight from her Maker that duties of a lesser order would appear trivial and unnecessary [illegible]

"You are the only girl for me," he [illegible]. It made her dizzy when she [illegible] Jimmie [illegible] with futil[illegible] thoughts in its wake—regretful thoughts that could not overtake the swifter vision.

"I don't know [illegible] liked you at first," [illegible] had told her new admirer, and she [illegible] glad that he had to go away with only that. But there were other meetings to come. And the Harvest Home festival—well, she was going to defy the home government and go with her own escort. There would be a pretty row, she thought, if her father knew—so—but what was a girl ever going to do, anyway? Who wants to be mewed up all the time?

For the first time in her life Violet began to plan a career of subterfuge. The farm next to her father's was owned by a neighbor, Mr. Jamison, who had several young people in his family. They were going in a body to the festival, which was to be held in the old town hall at Ashville. It was no strange thing for Violet to ride with them to town to attend church, or for other good causes.

"I think I'll ride over with the Jamisons," was often her excuse for not riding with her parents. And now, in her new and delightful enchantment, none of the varied shades of honor known to mankind was troubling Violet. For the festival she arranged to be picked up on the road to Jamison's by her enchanter. That was easily accomplished.

"Tonight I am going to have my answer," he remarked confidently, as he took his seat by her side and lifted the reins from the whipstock, "and I can just be pretty sure you won't throw me over—eh, little Violet? You mustn't do it, Violet," he pleaded so earnestly that her heart melted to hear him.

"I'll tell you some time," she smiled.

"Well, let's ride around a while, and go to the old festival afterwards," he [illegible] an arm about her waist.

"When is Anabelle coming back?" [illegible] asked [illegible] longing for more time, and not knowing that her query was likely to hurt any one.

"I don't know. She's gone to do some shopping. That takes a woman a long time, doesn't it?" evaded this wooer of simple maids.

"If she has lots of money it does," laughed Violet.

"I'm going to give you lots of money when I get you," was his reply. "For I love you so much, why, there's nothing I wouldn't buy for my sweetheart. There's going to be an auto for her when we go to Boston to live." Oh, but he could promise things, could the Prince of Hearts.

Violet smiled again at the alluring prospect. Never had she even dreamed of a lover who would press his suit with such fervor. Never had she thought that a man could fascinate her with eyes, voice, manner, and clothes as this one did.

Violet did not dream of the nature of Anabelle's shopping trip to Augusta. She had no way of knowing that after Anabelle had vainly coaxed her prospective husband to tell her what she ought to buy for a wedding outfit she had fled to her aunt for advice. Her aunt would act for her in the place of her departed mother. So she had gone away with her father's generous check to make her necessary purchases, and then, with feverish haste, to return to her own Prince of Hearts.

No one but her father and Frank Simpson knew that she was going to be on hand for the festival. She had hurried her shopping in order to make it, intending to enjoy her lover's delight when she appeared unexpectedly upon the scene. So Frank, with the delivery wagon, was waiting dutifully at the station when she left the train, and he drove her dutifully to her home. Afterward he called dutifully to take her over to the town hall, when she had made up a little lunch and tied it with a red ribbon.

Altho it was growing late and the town hall was well filled with people when they arrived, Anabelle looked about in vain for the familiar form of the one she had promised to marry.

The fiddlers, all old men with a varied assortment of beards, noses, and chins, were beginning to strum at their instruments, and the elders began to secure good seats among the less decorated spots on the walls where there were no wheat tufts or corn tassels, or pumpkins or sunflowers. The hall was adorned with other fruits and other flowers, too. And the young people began to form for a square dance.

Anabelle refused to dance with Frank, and found an old lady who had been fond of her mother and grandmother, and sat down to chat with her, outwardly happy and gay, but inwardly growing more and more petulant as time passed and there was no sign of her missing lover. Wonder was beginning to take hold of her mind, a vague fear of something wrong surmounting it, when, looking up at a sudden stir at the wide double entrance of the hall, she saw "Jack Weldon" entering with Violet Lawrence at his side.

Anabelle stared. There could be no mistaking "Jack's" graceful form and his crown of wavy brown hair that reached above the heads of the dancers. And Violet! She caught glimpses of a radiant face, a sparkle in it, and an air of ownership that gave her a cruel stab of jealousy, as well as a cold clutch at her throat. She sat very still for a moment, a bitter tumult going on within, and her eyes following the new arrivals as Violet led her friend here and there introducing him.

When Anabelle decided what she must do, she arose and advanced to the place where the two were standing. She would not trust herself to a moment's delay once she came to a decision. She touched the arm of her [illegible] and enjoyed the look of surprise that swept into his eyes.

"Oh-ho, Anabelle! How d'ye do? I didn't know you were back so soon," he exclaimed, and shook hands cordially. Instantly he would have recovered his ease, but her white look of anger halted him.

"I must see you alone, Jack—come outside," she whispered tensely. And he bowed, left Violet with her friends, and followed.

Anabelle's rage was suffocating her. Outside, the moonlight flooded the street, and splattered with patches the tangle of teams hitched to their several posts under the old shade trees. A few lanterns gleamed feebly from the wagons. Some of the horses, relieved of their harness, swung into restricted freedom as they ate their belated rations of oats from a box before them. Anabelle made her way, unseeing and without fear.

"Jack," she said, facing him in the midst of the teams, "is this the reason you would not let me announce our engagement—so you might go about with another girl if I went away? Jack, I know you are false to me. I know you are untrue. Jack Weldon, how dare you—how dare you come here tonight with Violet Lawrence?"

Her rage choked her and she became silent, but she glared at him, in angry stupor, watching hawklike every move of his handsome face.

"Now, Anabelle, dearie, don't," he expostulated. "What can the child mean, saying I'm false to her? Anabelle, really now, you look angry. False to you, am I? Never! Come, come, tell me why you think such things of me," and he put a caressing arm about her waist.

Anabelle drew back too angry to endure his touch. She pointed toward the lighted hall from whose high windows music and the sound of dancing feet flooded thru.

"So you are true, coming here with Violet Lawrence?" she sneered. "The man whom I am to marry has come here with another girl. That is all right, is it? And she comes in and shows you off to her friends as if she owned you. Do you think I have no eyes in my head?" she panted, her voice breaking a little as she watched him hungrily.

It was truly a trying situation, but the young man thought he could manage it. He folded his arms, straightened up, and nodded.

"I see what you mean," he said. "I

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understand how you feel. Really I can't blame you, Anabelle. But listen. I met Violet by accident one day. She gave me a drink of water at her well. I met her afterwards here in the village. I thought she was pretty, but I found her just a simple, uneducated girl. She is quite ignorant, dear. Why, she never went to boarding-school in her life. She isn't fitted for me. You know she isn't. I brought her here because you left me lonely. But you are the only girl for me, dear—you ought to know it. Come—let's be friends. You know how much I love you, and you alone."

He held out his hand again, but Anabelle pouted and held off, determined to punish him thoroly. But her heart was hungry to hear the very words that he had said, and she let him draw her arm thru his and then she let him kiss her and coax her a little more until her heart became almost charitable toward poor ignorant little Violet Lawrence. She let him lead her back to the gay hall, at whose entrance they met Frank Simpson, with honest love and righteous jealousy in his soul, who claimed Anabelle for the next dance. Anabelle actually smiled a welcome to her old suitor, but paused with a confiding smile to whisper to her newer one:

"My lunch box is tied with a red ribbon, Jack," and there was no mistaking her meaning. For by and by the lunch boxes would be auctioned off to the gentlemen who, according to the program, would be obliged to eat with the ladies who owned them.

"Jack" nodded, with his merry brown brown eyes dancing. He thought how luckily he had averted serious trouble with Anabelle. And to further pacify her he resolved to buy the box with the red ribbon. But Frank had overheard the whisper, and patient and true tho he was, he determined for once to have his innings in the game that he saw going on under his very nose.

"A red ribbon," he murmured, "it's a red ribbon again, is it? Well, that looks easy, and I'll work the red ribbon for all it's worth."

He smiled swiftly as he led Anabelle thru the mazes of the "Money Musk" and when it was over seated her near her old lady friend and slipped away to the table behind a bower of cornstalks, pumpkins and conical heaps of apples, pears, peaches, and asters. Here it took but a moment to select the one box that was tied with a red ribbon. Carefully untying it, he selected another which the red ribbon quickly adorned in place of its own of white.

"So much for the red ribbon," he grinned, and got back to his next partner without being missed.

There followed an hour of fun and dancing. Then the lunch boxes were auctioned off, and in the midst of the fun of discovering unexpected, even impossible, partners, "Jack" tried honestly to secure the box that was tied with Anabelle's colors. It fell to him. The white ribbon, of course, fell to Frank Simpson, as he had planned to have it. But "Jack," who really wanted to heal the sore that Anabelle had in her heart, fumbled with the red box impatiently, and at last got it untied, opened the box, took from it a slip of paper, and read the name thereon.

"Violet Lawrence." He read it out and waved it excitedly above his head, Violet blushing happily.

"Fate has played you into my hands," he laughed, as they went away together. He was somewhat nonplused, not knowing but that he had been tricked in some way, but Anabelle was more bewildered than he. Suspecting a trick, but not knowing how it was played, both joined the laughing crowd on the lawn outside, where paper lanterns were swinging airily in the warm night air.

Violet, flushed and excited, wondered at the reproachful glances that Anabelle threw her way. She wondered at Anabelle's lack of hilarity when there was so much of it all around her. But her attention was at once claimed by her escort, who, leaning over the box as she opened its paper napkin, murmured words that no one else might hear:

"You can see that Heaven has decreed to give you to me. I am for you and you are for me, and you will know by what has happened tonight what your answer ought to be. When we ride home by and by will you give me your answer?"

Violet looked down, too confused to see that the box she was opening was not hers. Its contents could not have come from her mother's pantry. But she did not know this, could not know it, with her senses in a whirl of pain and happiness.

"You'll tell me, won't you, *little Vi?*" she heard again, as they began on the lunch, and Violet picked out a sour pickle and nodded assent to his pleading.

"Maybe I will," she said shyly, nibbling at the smallest end, without knowing whether it was a sour pickle from her mother's larder or from the Whitcome store.

She only knew that she was meeting the greatest crisis in the life of a young girl, and she thought, as she looked at the Prince of Hearts, that she was meeting it wisely and well. And she was eager to prove her wisdom to those who made up the home government which she had so bravely defied. She was eager to show her mother and her too careful father that true hearts, true lovers, true friends will find each other in spite of every handicap.

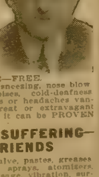
CHAPTER X.

SOMETHING that stirred in the brain of his magnate father whose prowess on Wall street had long since been recognized must have been stirring in the mind of the son as he managed his love affairs so adroitly that each girl to whom he whispered his sweet words of endearment believed implicitly in him.

So "Jack Weldon," known at home as Reginald DeVelt, could be compared to the physician who knows just what to give to his several patients to fit individual cases. As he rode thru the moonlight with Violet trembling and blushing by his side, he again assured her that learned girls like Anabelle were too much for him, that he liked the simple modesty of girls like herself far better. This, he knew, healed the sore place that Violet had felt over Anabelle's superior chances. That his double dealing could not long continue with safety he was sure, but he was determined to play his game close to the edge of the abyss with a rare recklessness as to the consequences.

That the abyss might be nearer than he knew was a compelling suspicion. More than once, after his attentions to Violet, guarded tho they were by careful managing, he often enough had disquieting thoughts of what might be headed his way before he was done.

But tonight the mellow light of the moon and the dewy silence of the country roads, the fragrance of the summer fruitage that came on every



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breeze, and the winking stars from a cloudless sky put thoughts of danger to rout. Even Violet herself was sure that true lovers had no business to think of improbable perils. She thought it right and holy to trust a man so fine, so pleasant, so amusing, and above all, so loverlike.

The horse did not stop at the front gate. He had a "tip" from the driver and trotted along to the big gate, entered, and made toward the bars that opened into the night pasture.

"It is too nice to go in yet," "Jack" explained to Violet's protest. "We can tie the pony here, and then take a walk where the grass is not too long to be wet with the dew. Come," he lifted her down and coaxed her toward the bars. It was a queer notion. Violet held back, laughing and confused. "Come, I want to tell you something," he explained, using plenty of a lover's mesmerizing material by way of argument. "All the stars are telling a story like mine," he quoted, as he let down the bars.

Beyond, in black and white shadow, stood the old stacks of hay from last season, partly eaten away by the cattle. On one side of them the moon would be a flood of white warmth and beauty, a very proper place, he said, where plans of the future might be discussed. Only a few cattle were here, and they were resting complacently after their day's labors.

"Come, little Vi, see how the moon is beckoning us, and promising that she will take good care that no harm shall come to us," was a final argument that persuaded Violet to go as far as the old hay stacks and then back again. She promised herself that it would be only a little walk.

"Now you can tell me that you love me," coaxed her lover, with his arm about her waist.

She looked at him with love in her eyes. The vision of Jimmie Lampson, gone to "make a way" for himself and for her sake, was no more. If he had been as elegant, as handsome, as captivating as her new lover, she would not have looked at this young man with such glorified eyes. But Jimmie's honesty had a plebeian setting, and it lacked the adventurous feature that now fascinated Violet, so that his love for her was consigned to oblivion.

"You do love me, don't you?" continued "Jack," with conviction in his voice, and after her soft reply the public had no admittance.

It became quite the thing for Violet to tell her mother that she was "going over to Jamison's" for a walk. And one night Violet stood at her own front gate after one of her evening strolls, and sobbed brokenly and bitterly about something that her lover's kisses and assurances did not cure. But she tried to make them do what they could toward mending matters, and at last she let him go away and then sought her chamber under the gabled roof and went to bed with a fear in her heart that was not caused by the beating of the big old honey-locust branches outside. How many nights in her childhood had she been frightened by the scraping sound of those branches on the roof over her head. But her dread and fear were not of a thing so innocent. It was an undefined fear, but more positive than were those phantom fears of childhood, and all the bitter weeping that served to put her to sleep night after night took away neither the fear nor the hurt that lay like a dagger-thrust in her maiden heart.

"Jack" wrote to his friend soon after the "haystack strolls" had begun that he thought it about time for them to be taking up the cares of the counting-room. Was he ready? Had the others taken enough plunder from the woods to break camp? How were the bugs and the butterflies holding out? Was the embryo author entering his cocoon? And when was he to emerge with his fluttering wings brightly spread to the admiring sunshine of public applause?

The letter brought Harvey to Ashville. Old Fischer drove him into town with the same grim pleasure that he always had in playing his part in the one daily town amusement. He dropped his one passenger at the usual place, and grimly drove away to the stable. The two young men dined together.

"This game is about played out," Reginald, otherwise "Jack," was saying confidentially, as they smoked on the veranda afterward. "I've been having the time of my life down here in this little burg, but I'm going to get killed by some rube or other if I don't light out."

"Why, what's in the wind?" Harvey asked, laughing.

"Oh, these girls- these girls--they're so dangerous!"

Harvey let out a roar "Who will do the shooting?" he wanted to know.

"I'll show you by and by," the other replied. "You only need to go in the Whitcome store to see who will do it. There's a rube, a clerk fellow, that looks daggers at me every time I show up. He's madly in love with his employer's daughter, and he thinks I'm going to carry her off right before his eyes. And he wants to do it."

"Oh, sets the wind in that quarter?"

"It doesn't set—it tornadoes. You'd think by the look of him that I'd broken his idol and smashed his castle."

"Well, how about the girl? Is she for him or is she for you?"

"Oh, she's for me, all right. Why, she's even been off buying wedding stuff—toggery, you know. Went down to Augusta where her aunt lives and plundered the city. Said her aunt would know what was worn in a place like Boston."

Harvey eyed his friend with a look of wonder. "Gee, but you are getting in deep! You go on with it, and how about the pater? How about the mater? How about "

"Go on with it go on with it?" Reginald, otherwise "Jack," stared blankly at his friend. "Say, whom are you talking to, anyway?"

Gravely amused, Harvey replied: "I'm talking to the son and heir of the DeVelt millions. He laughed a trifle uneasily, anxious to keep the bond of friendship intact, but yet appalled at the evident temerity of his lifelong chum.

Reginald rewarded him with a testy silence.

"Well, come on over to the store and show me your sword of Damocles," Harvey cajoled. "You can buy the cigars while I take in his dagger glances. If you wish, I can take him aside and tell him it's all a joke, and he can have the girl of his heart back again as soon as we leave," he grinned, seizing Reginald by the arm and bringing him up standing. "What do you say to that?"

"I say you are not to butt in," was the answer, but finally Reginald was willing to show off the disconsolate clerk.

They sauntered in at the wide doors of John Whitcome's general merchandise store, and moved toward the showcase that contained the smokers' goods.

"A box of Havanas," Reginald ordered, as Frank Simpson approached to learn their wishes. "We must have a good supply," he added carelessly, "for it's a long way to New York City if you haven't a cigar along."

Frank handed an open box of his best to the Prince of Hearts, who took out a couple, tossed them toward the clerk, and offered the box to Harvey, who selected one. Frank's gift lay unregarded. The bill which was tendered was accepted, and the change returned, just as Mr. Whitcome, who had been arranging some new calico goods, came over to his prospective son-in-law.

"You going away?" he asked, bewildered.

"Yes, we're off tomorrow. We've had all the sport we want, and now we must head for the grindstone."

"Wh-when you coming back?" Mr. Whitcome asked, wondering that Anabelle had failed to tell him of this sudden departure.

"I don't know. Depends on my business career," Reginald replied carelessly. "But I'll let you know," he added, as they sauntered out puffing at their Havanas.

Safely back on the veranda, they strolled off to the far end of the premises, and so on down the country street.

"By gosh," Harvey exclaimed, "that clerk fellow's hard hit! He actually glowered fire and brimstone. Say, I don't blame him, either. If you ever make me play the lonesome lover, I'll stuff your handsome skin full of lead prunes."

For reply Reginald smiled softly. "I'll make an exception in your case, seeing who it is," he promised, "but the rest of the girls are all my pride and my prey."

"You old Mormon Turk," protested Harvey, still amused but inclined to read him a lecture on morals, "you sure almost make me tired!"

They strolled on and turned toward the lake, as Anabelle, looking her prettiest, but suffering from a lack of attention on the part of her fiance, came into the store, after discovering that no one was smoking on the hotel veranda.

Her father met her with a searching look. "So your young man is leaving town, is he?" he said. "You didn't say anything about it to me, did you?"

"No, but he told me," Anabelle lied, and turned away to hide the dismayed surprise in her eyes.

Her manner was repelling, and her father urged no more questions upon

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her, but turned back to his prints and ginghams, and Anabelle, seeing the desk was unoccupied for a moment, seized a pen and dashed off a note. This she folded hastily and put into an envelope bearing her father's business address. She had time to slip the letter in her dress without sealing before Frank came in from the back room.

He fumbled with the papers that she had disarranged, threw two certain unwelcome cigars into the wastebasket, and looked hungrily after Anabelle, who was restlessly arranging some notions on a shelf nearby, and wondering how she was going to get her letter delivered to "Jack." She wandered into the back room without knowing that she had dropped the letter, but Frank, noticing a stray envelope where she had stood, picked it up and opened it. A glance showed him its contents, and he dropped it on the desk as if it had been fire:

"Dear Jack," he had read, "meet me at the old place. Are you going away? You know we ought to be married right away. Jack, please meet me. God help me if you don't!

"ANABELLE."

The paper was hastily put back in its enevlope, and Frank, stunned with the news it contained, breathed fast.

"By the Almighty!" he swore, with a black look, "he'll meet her, or——"

Anabelle hurried in looking for the letter. Had she dropped it on the floor? Where could it be?

"Looking for something, Anabelle?" Frank asked, seeing her agitation. "You didn't drop this, did you?" he added, holding out the innocent-looking missive.

"Oh, yes, thanks." Anabelle snatched it from him and sealed it. "Can I get you to deliver it for me? It is for Mr. Weldon, Frank, and I want him to have it right away. I suppose he will be at the hotel."

Frank nodded bitterly. "I'll do it," he promised, "never fear. Trot along home, Anabelle," he added, "and don't you worry."

His set face broke into a smile that he knew was phantom-like, and Anabelle went out, glancing wistfully toward the deserted hotel as she took the path toward home. On reaching the house she intended to make for the trysting place near the lake that she and "Jack" knew so well.

As soon as she was gone Frank took out a revolver, looked it over carefully, hid it in his coat pocket, took his hat and the letter, and went in search of the man who had wrecked his happiness.

The victim of Frank's black hate had left Harvey at the lake, and had started back on some errand to the hotel when Frank left the store in search of him. What it was that he came back alone for he promptly forgot, and it is to his credit that he could never after remember what his errand was. It seemed that Fate had taken his case in her own hands at this time and mapped out a program of her own.

Fate has compelling hands, pushing, beckoning, forceful manners. She grasps a victim by stealth and with a relentless zeal that is uncanny. So it was that Violet, yielding to some such influence, was in town on this warm August afternoon, because her restless love for "Jack" refused to be calmed by the faith, vague but earnest, that she had for him.

Whatever the reason, she was on the street when Frank, with the letter in his hand and murder in his eyes, left the store. He discovered his quarry a hundred rods away and hurried past Violet, who was intending to meet her lover and reprove him for his recent neglect.

From a distance she saw Frank call "Jack" aside, but she did not know what the letter that she saw pass from one to the other was about. She had no way of knowing that Frank's fingers, fairly itching with hate, were on the revolver in his coat pocket. The note was hastily scanned by the young man whom Frank eyed with stern determination.

"Poof! What does the little lady want of me?" he laughed uneasily, and tearing the letter into bits he tossed them to the breeze. He glanced around. "I'll not have time ——" he began, but stopped at the sight of the look and the gun leveled upon him.

"D—n you," Frank swore, "you'll do as she wishes, or you are as dead as is your sense of honor! She is waiting for you now. Get there!" And there was no mistaking the look that went with the words.

"Oh, have you read the note, then?" "Jack" asked, with a sneer, tho he moved a bit out of range of the gun. "I admire your honor, really. But being the rube that you are——"

Here was a man to weigh standards of honor. Frank's mouth spat out another oath, the second in his life, his finger pressed recklessly upon the trigger. Neither of the two noticed Violet, who, terrified at the danger her lover was in, and thinking Frank had suddenly gone insane, started toward them, then turned and fled into the store where Mr. Whitcome was still busy arranging his prints and ginghams.

"Oh, Mr. Whitcome—what is Frank doing? Come quick—he's shooting Jack Weldon. Come! come! Jack's mine - save him, Mr. Whitcome!"

Mr. Whitcome was dragged to the door by the frantic girl. He heard her assertions with a wild bound of amazement, but altho she dragged at his sleeve and pointed, he could see nothing. So, running to the street, he was in time to see two hats steadily disappearing down a narrow lane toward the lake. It was Violet's whisper, hoarse with fright, that turned the storekeeper's Christian soul back thousands of years to the primitive savagery of man: "I'm to marry Jack! Oh, save him—save him for me!" It was cold steel in the heart of Anabelle's father, who had joyed in her happiness; whose generous check had already brought about her wedding preparations; who in a flash understood at last the nature of his daughter's lover. With the fires of his dead youth swiftly relit, he outran the frightened Violet, and sprang along the winding path where he had seen the two men

Presently he met Frank returning. By the look on his face the blackguard was already dead.

"Where's the skunk?" he snapped. "Where's Weldon?"

Frank waved him toward the meeting-place, and he dashed on. But bounding forward, he halted at the sight of Anabelle, his child, on her knees, her hands clutching the wrists of her lover, and her agonized voice pleading for his mercy.

"Jack—Jack!" he heard, as he crouched behind them, the hazel bushes screening him, "you know I can't let you go away—not now, Jack! You said if I—would—consent—you'd surely marry me! Jack—Jack!"

The dread, the terror, the peril she was in manifested itself in every accent of her low-pitched voice, but the young man pulled away from her hands and cut her prayer [illegible]

"Look here, Anabelle, cut out the melodrama! You embarrass me, girl. Don't act silly. Be reasonable, there's a woman. You ought to know I could never marry a country girl like you. Gee! Anybody ought to see that. I've been happy with you this summer, but to marry you—why, my folks would throw me over. They'd never——"

He never finished explaining why he could not go on with her, for Mr. Whitcome himself confronted the two, and stood over the fainting girl and the testy lover. There was a nasty threat in his voice:

"Do you intend to marry that girl?" he gritted.

Anabelle sprang up with a moan of horror at sight of her father, but her lover turned away. These rubes could be disagreeable, all right, Reginald thought petulantly

"Say," he cried, "you people make me sick! I can't marry a girl like that," he whined, "and you ought to know it! My father's a multimillionaire. That's the reason I can't marry her."

He was stopped by the father, who here turned a white fury upon his idolized child.

"You go!" he cried out. "Go leave my roof forever! Go, and never let me look upon your face again—go!"

Anabelle did not obey at once. She had a lingering faith in the man who had dishonored her, and she turned for a last prayer to him.

"Jack—Jack—please," she begged, "be true—be true to me, Jack! I'll go away with you anywhere. I'll do anything you wish, but be true to me, Jack!"

It cut the father's heart with a knife of fire to hear it, but the young man resisted her.

"I can't!" he whined again, and the father's vengeance was quickly upon him. He seized an oar that was caught in the brush, and raised it to strike him to the ground, as Anabelle, faint and weeping, and utterly deserted, crept away into the shelter of the pines.

Next week's Ledger will contain the concluding chapters of this remarkable story. You will miss a great deal if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories that money will buy, so send in your subscriptions and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing

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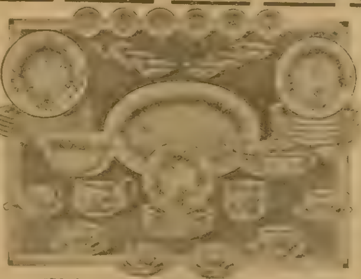

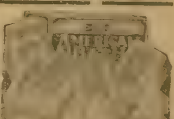

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

A kiss in time may be one of nine.

Laziness is born in a man; industry is acquired.

It's easier to land a husband than to keep him landed.

People who are too fresh are always getting into a pickle.

Only a lucky man can afford to pose as a disbeliever in luck.

Probably more intellectual women would marry if they were asked.

We all want to go to Heaven, but there is no demand for rapid transit.

Every time a man gets it in the neck he realizes how little he amounts to.

Some men get [illegible] of the ability to separate others from the [illegible]

When a girl is told she's as pretty as a picture, comic valentines don't count.

And some men are so full of human nature that they have no room for principle.

Go to a friend for advice, to a stranger for charity, and to a relative for nothing.

When it comes to calling men from their beds, the fire bell puts it all over the church bell.

Ever notice how easy it is for a person afflicted with insomnia to go to sleep when it is time to get up?

If you happen to hear a woman praising a man's wisdom it's a sure sign that he is not her husband.

When a married couple gets along well, the neighboring women say "Oh, his wife knows how to manage him."

There are times when a man doesn't think he is getting his money's worth. One is when he invests in a monument.

Some men are such clever liars that they can even explain to the satisfaction of their wives where they have been.

Some men kick when they have a heavy load to carry, and some others kick because they haven't the price of a "load."

To an engaged couple wedded life appears to be all sunshine—but to a husband and wife it looks suspiciously like moonshine at times.

We sometimes hear of a woman who is said to be worth her weight in gold, but we never heard of one who was worth her weight in dollar bills.

Home and Health

RECIPES FOR VALENTINE'S DAY.

CUPID'S ICE—Drain a quart of the choicest canned white cherries or sweet red cherries and add the juice to a quart of water and cupful, or less, of granulated sugar. Cut the cherries in half and mix with the liquid. Mix well and freeze. This ice should be packed in ice and salt for an hour or more before serving.

ST. VALENTINE SANDWICHES—For these you will need a heart-shaped cutter, which can be bought for about five cents. Have one loaf of white bread and one of graham. Spread each slice before cutting with soft butter. Then cut very thin. Spread half the slices with the sandwich mixture. Cover with the plain buttered slices. Press firmly together and cut into heart shapes. Keep the sandwiches covered with oil paper till needed. Fill some of the slices of brown bread with this mixture. To two cupfuls of very well cooked chicken chopped fine add a well beaten egg and a quarter of a cupful of thick cream, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir over hot water till the egg thickens. Take off from fire and when cool spread on the sandwich and bread. A little chopped pickle added to half of the mixture will add variety. Spread some of the white bread slices with a mixture of watercress mixed with cream cheese and a little mayonnaise dressing. Spread either graham or white bread with a mixture of fresh cottage cheese, paprika and minced parsley. A few plain bread and [illegible] always accept-

A VALENTINE PARTY.

Valentine's Day, a day that is given over to the expression of sentiment, is the best day in the whole year for reversing the natural order of things and giving a leap year party. So, if you have not yet thought out the kind of party you are going to give on the fourteenth of the month, make it a leap year party and combine the customs and festivities of the day and the year.

Most of the successes of a leap year party depends on the enthusiasm of the guests and their willingness to enter into the spirit of the old custom which decrees that once in every four years woman changes places with man and courts and cares for, while man sits by and graciously accepts this homage.

If the men enter into the spirit of the day they will gather in little groups, simper and giggle and wait with feigned timidity for the advances of the girls. They, on the other hand, must seek chairs for the men, while they themselves stand, must be solicitous about drafts, and must fetch and carry all the evening that the men may be perfectly comfortable.

Follow out a Valentine's Day scheme as far as the decorations are concerned. Pink and red are the accepted Valentine's Day colors, but as they sometimes clash when used together it would perhaps be safer to choose one of them and stick to it for all decorations. Festoons of paper hearts and arrows in the doorways, paper Cupids pinned to curtains and draperies and perched on shelves and backs of chairs and a few pink or red flowers will give a festive air to the rooms in which the guests assemble.

When the time for refreshments comes, the girls must, in leap year fashion, serve the men. They can either escort the men to the dining-room, or else serve them at the small tables where the games have been played, but whatever arrangement is made, the girls must forage for the refreshments.

The dining-room should bear out the same scheme of decoration as the rest of the house. An inexpensive and effective decoration can be accomplished with ten cents' worth of the little sugar candies that are about the size of half a French pea—and until you begin to use them you will not realize how many ten cents will buy.

Either red or pink ones will do. Cover the table with a white cloth. Then with the little candies spell out the words "Valentine's Day" at one end of the table and at the other "Leap Year, 1916." Some ferns in the center of the table and red or pink shaded candles or a few flowers complete the table decorations.

Pretty supper favors are heart-shaped paper baskets of bonbons. These may be made of little paper patty cases which can be bought in heart shape at the confectioner's at this time of year. They should be covered with two or three narrow, overlapping frills of pink or red crepe paper, pasted on and fastened with a band of ribbon, with a dainty bow tied at one side. Handles made of heavy wire or thin reed or willow sticks wound with paper or simply a heavy roll of crepe paper and decorated with a bow of ribbon or bunch of diminutive paper flowers finish the baskets.

FASHION NOTES.

1830 styles will prevail for spring.

Leather handles are new on women's umbrellas.

Suede leather, it is said, will replace the glazed and patent leather for the spring.

Magnificent materials inspire the creation of beautiful wraps and many fascinating models have been prepared for the woman who frequents the sunny places of the South. These fabrics are used most lavishly, for the designer does not stint himself in the fashioning of the new wraps. Vol[illegible] folds are [illegible] draped from the shoulder and flare in myriad ripples around the figure, generously covering the new hoops that accentuate the bouffant tendency in the dress of the day.

FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

The wrapping papers from bakers' bread are excellent to wrap school lunches, also cake and other food you wish to keep from drying out.

The usefulness of long spoons of enamel or wood or aluminum is not always appreciated by the young housekeeper. A row of these near the stove will prove a true aid in stirring large kettles of boiling food, and in basting roasts in very hot ovens. Wooden spoons should always be used in mixing salads and stewed fruits, like cranberries, which contain acids corrosive to metals. Reliable chemists say, however, that the darkening of aluminum does not affect the food that is cooked in the vessels to the injury of any one's stomach.

NEEDLEWORK.

A great many needlewomen like to finish pieces of needlework with a strip of fringe rather than buttonholing the edge. This is very easily done when the edges are straight, but when a round edge is to be considered the task is a little more complicated. When the embroidery on the piece is completed, trim the material neatly and turn and stitch a neat hem. You are then ready to join the fringe.

First of all, baste the fringe very carefully to the hemmed edge, allowing only enough fullness to get around the curve, but not enough to prevent the fringe from lying flat. Do not gather the fringe, for this would prevent the fringe from lying flat. When this work is done, draw the basting thread enough to make the fringe fall properly into place; when the fringe is in this position, stitch it on the machine before removing the basting thread. It can be sewed on by hand if you prefer. When the stitching is completed, dampen the piece and iron it on the wrong side with a moderately hot iron. The fringe will then lie down flat and even. These directions will also apply to the joining of lace.

HEALTH NOTES.

Do not neglect to brush and comb the hair and massage the scalp merely to save a curl or wave.

Much of our good health depends upon the condition of the teeth, for digestion depends upon the proper mastication of the food which gives nourishment and proper mastication is impossible if the teeth are decayed. It is said that if the teeth are perfectly cleansed, they will not decay.

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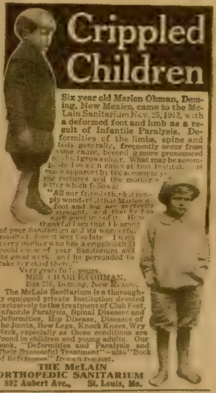

Six year old Marlen Ohman, Deming, New Mexico, came to the McLain Sanitarium Nov. 25, 1913, with a deformed foot and limb as a result of Infantile Paralysis. Deformities of the limbs, spine and body generally, frequently occur from same cause, becoming more pronounced as child grows older. What may be accomplished in such cases at this Institution is made apparent by the accompanying pictures and the mother's letter which follows:

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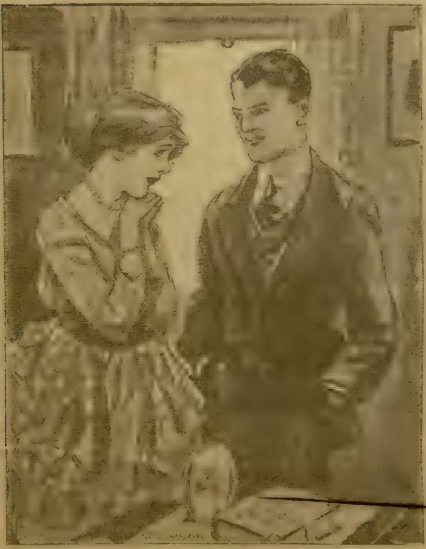
Captain Kidd's Treasure

Or, The Mystery of Shelter Cove

By Capt. Jack Judson



"How much does the treasure amount to?"

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CHAPTER X.

WE LEFT Dick and Rodney in possession of Captain Kidd's long-looked-for treasure chest, but before we proceed to relate their later adventures, let us explain how the genuine plan showing where the treasure was buried fell into Dick's hands.

The reader will readily recall Detective Murdock's visit to Constable Shavers, who was laid up from the load of duck shot which Dick fired into him after the theft of the paper. Mr. Murdock was a gentleman who cared nothing for pirate gold; he had come from the city for the purpose of unraveling the mystery of Danny Bimm's death, and had discovered that the buried loot was in some strange manner connected with the crime.

After having paid Mr. Shavers a visit, Murdock strolled down the street and entered Jonas Benham's store. He had learned from the constable enough to tell him that the wounded official did not possess the stolen plans, therefore he had to draw his own conclusions

He found no one in the store but the proprietor himself, and Jonas was taking his ease in a chair. Upon the detective's entrance he was about to rise when Murdock told him that he did not want to purchase anything.

"You know a mighty lot about the stars," remarked the grocer. "I like to hear about them."

"Yes, astronomy is a delightful study," answered the detective, clipping the end of a cigar. "I came near becoming an astronomer when I was a boy."

"Indeed? Is there much money in it?"

"Not so much as there is in other things."

Murdock rose as he finished, and going to the front door, turned the key and locked it. Benham's eyes seemed about to pop out of his head.

"Excuse the liberty I have taken," said the detective, as he came back. "I have called on a little private business, and I don't care to be interfered with."

There was no reply, but one could have seen that the grocer was somewhat restless.

"What is all this talk I hear about Captain Kidd's treasure being buried on Long Island?" he asked.

"Mere rumor, I think," was the reply. "There is no doubt, however, that the old freebooter cruised along our coasts, but as to his planting any of his stolen loot here is another story."

"But the people seem to believe that he did."

"It seems so from the way they talk."

"Haven't you ever caught the fever, Mr. Benham?" quietly asked Murdock.

"What, me, a business man, run after such legends?" smiled Jonas. "Bless your life! I have all I care to look after in other ways."

"One would think so," said Murdock. "I am too well known here to run after something that perhaps has no existence except in the imagination."

"Yes."

Jonas was being thrown off his guard by the detective's suave words and approached the familiar.

"Speaking about Captain Kidd's gold," said he, "there used to be an old man around here who claimed that his grandfather served under the famous freebooter."

"Indeed? What was his name?"

"He called himself Danny B[illegible]"

"Do you know, Mr. Benham, that these old secrets interest me?" said the sleuth. "By the way, where might I find this Danny Bimm"

"I believe he is dead now."

"Then I am too late to make his acquaintance. Did you know the old man?"

"Not very well. He was secretive and never picked up acquaintances. It was said that he had——"

As if he was getting into deep water, Benham changed the subject.

"But what did rumor say?" asked Murdock, bringing the grocer back to the old trail.

"It was said that old Danny carried the clew to the Kidd treasure."

"Oho! Carried some sort of means by which he might locate the gold?"

"Yes, sir."

"Funny no one found it after the old man's death?"

"I for one don't believe he carried such a secret If he did why didn't he go after the coin himself? He certainly needed it."

"Now, Mr. Benham, you interest me," smiled the shrewd detective. "Why, this story would read like a novel if it were put in print."

"I don't read novels," snapped Benham

"I do," answered Murdock. "Say for instance that the old man was murdered for his secret, say that a boy was looking for the gold, that he had actually found the clew, but had it stolen from him by a man who broke into the boy's house one night and got the paper and a load of shot."

The changes that came to Benham's face while the detective spoke were startling It changed color half a dozen times.

"I'm only surmising, of course," Murdock went on. [illegible] Suppose that after the robber had been shot he carried the plan [illegible] the bird shot to a confederate and turned it over to him? That would help the novel along, don't you think?"

"You must write novels," grinned Jonas Benham. "A man who can talk so knowingly about the planets ought to be able to do most anything."

"I take that for a high compliment," said Murdock. "When I was here last you had a clerk."

"So I had, but he is somewhat indisposed."

"Got into a fight, didn't he?"

"A little fisticuff," admitted the grocer

"And the other boy was too much for him? Just so. It often happens that way. I know from experience."

There was no reply. A new light came suddenly into the detective's eyes.

"Let's get down to brass tacks, Mr. Benham. I am here for the paper the constable left with you after he got shot."

The face of the grocer of Bloomfield went as white as an aspen leaf.

"What's that, sir?" he exclaimed, clutching the rounds of the chair. "You don't mean to tell me that Noll gave me anything after he was shot?"

"I mean to say nothing else. I am here for that paper."

"It is false!" cried Jonas. "What, me connected with a plot of robbery?"

"Why certainly, my dear Mr. Benham. I have sent better men to Sing Sing than you."

"Then you must be——"

"A detective? Yes. Where is the pa-

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per the constable gave you? Get it!"

"But——"

"No 'buts', if you please," interrupted Murdock. "I have just come from the constable's office. He's not able to be out yet, for some of the bird shot went in pretty deep. I guess you want to get rid of me. Well, the easiest way to do it is to fork over the clew to Captain Kidd's gold. You've locked it in your safe probably. Get up and hand it out."

A sudden thought brightened up the grocer's face.

"I don't want to get into trouble," said he. "Shavers did hand me a paper, but I never looked at it. I am only keeping it for him, that's all."

The grocer got up and sidled along the counter at the end of which stood a small iron safe. Murdock was at his heels.

"The paper, not that!" cried the detective, arresting the hand which darted at a revolver lying on top of the safe. "Touch that weapon and you'll be a dead man!"

Benham's heart sank.

"Now that's better," said Murdock, as the door of the safe swung outward. "Hand it to me."

Already Jonas had opened a drawer and taken out a folded paper which showed signs of age.

"This is what Shavers handed me for safe keeping," said he, handing it to Murdock over his shoulder. "I don't know why he values it so highly."

"Of course you don't," responded the detective, at whose lips was the shadow of a smile. "Your honesty can't be called into question, I am sure. Thank you."

Benham's look would have killed had it been a bullet. Murdock coolly unlocked the front door and stepped out.

"The old villain! I'll resume my acquaintance with him later on!" he exclaimed.

He went direct to a drug store, where he purchased an envelope and a stamp, and having addressed the former to Dick Spencer, he deposited it in the postoffice, and then quietly sought his boarding-house, satisfied with his little adventure.

CHAPTER XI.

"TOUCH that chest and you're dead boys! Captain Kidd's treasure belongs to us!"

These were the words, as the reader will remember, that assailed the ears of Dick and Rodney when they had drawn the iron chest from its old nesting-place. It was warning enough, but the young gold hunters were reluctant to cease the operations which had given them so much peril and adventures. The voice was loud and harsh, and had in it a veritable ring of doom. They could see four dark figures only a few feet away, and the beams of a dark-lantern revealed the weapons that covered them.

It was a moment of direst peril. Here they had found the pirate's treasure, and it was about to be taken from them by men who would do anything to accomplish their purpose.

"Stand where you are," continued the same voice, as all four came forward. "The slightest movement on your part consigns you to eternity."

In a minute the four, who were so masked that not a part of the face was visible, stood before the boys.

"So you've found it at last," said the unknown. "But Kidd's treasure is ours."

"I should say that it belongs to the person who has found it," ventured Dick, his blood running hot thru every vein.

"You are wrong; it belongs to the strongest," was the reply.

"If that is the code then it is yours."

At this juncture one of the four produced a rope which was severed so that the lengths were equal. The boys were tightly bound without resistance, for that would have been useless. What was to become of them they did not know.

"Is the boat ready?" the leader of the quartet asked.

"All ready, Captain."

"Then here we go," and the boys were hurried to the water's edge and thrown into a boat which rocked there. This proceeding caused Dick to recall his last voyage in a boat upon the bay when he made the acquaintance of Lawyer Stumps of New York.

"You understand the plan," said the leader, addressing one of his companions.

The man addressed got into the boat, to which a little skiff was tied, and taking up the oars he propelled the two craft from shore. Dick and Rodney were helpless. They could only look at one another in the light of the stars and speak with their eyes.

The two boats cut the water like arrows, and soon the dark landscape vanished. The captives had much to think about. On the very eve of success they had lost the great treasure; the cup had been snatched from their lips, and both believed that they were on the way to some terrible fate.

"We're doomed," said Rodney's look.

"I know it," responded Dick's eyes.

When the last sign of the Island faded from their vision the masked rower leaned toward them.

"Now for the next and last chapter," said he. "You may need a little water so I'll not be so cruel as to deprive you of it."

His hand moved toward the bottom of the boat, and the next second had torn loose one of the planks. A thrill swept thru the frames of the doomed boys.

When this infamous act had been done the man leaped into the skiff, carrying the oars with him, and then he cut the line which held the boats together.

"Good night and a pleasant voyage!" he cried to the speechless boys, and the skiff began to cut the water in its return to the cove.

For several seconds the boys did not speak. Already the water was coming into their boat, and they were still bound and helpless.

"We shall be drowned erelong," said Dick. "The villains have played their game all too well. We will never touch that which we have toiled for—Captain Kidd's loot."

Rodney gazed across the waste of starlit water and set his teeth hard. Dick tested his bonds, but they would not yield. Rodney had no better luck. Helpless as they were, they could not bail, and the water was asserting its merciless power.

Meanwhile the boat of doom was moving slowly out to sea, driven by a wind which had lately sprung up. Suddenly Dick's eye caught sight of the iron [illegible]lock, and a desperate thought flashed thru his mind.

"If I can only reach it," thought he, and then he began to roll toward it.

It was at the expense of overturning the boat, but he did not take note of that peril. By dint of exertion he at last reached his goal, and then he began to scrape his bonds back and forth across the iron. It was slow progress, for the iron was not jagged, but the boy kept on with gritted teeth and faint hope. All at once he felt that his wrists were free. He hailed the deliverance with a shout.

"Now for a fight with the water!" he cried, turning to Rodney. "See! my hands are free. Now for the knife."

In a little while he had severed the bonds at his feet and then he fell to work upon his companion's bonds. The knife was sharp and the cords yielded.

In the meantime the boat was half-full of water, but the boys took off their coats and went to work at it. It was a useless task, for the water continued to pour in upon them, and they soon realized their desperate condition.

"It is no use, Dick," suddenly exclaimed Rodney. "We are doomed to death!"

"While there's life there's hope," was the response, and Dick fought fate with renewed courage.

They looked on every side for a steamer's light, but none came across their vision. The boat was now yielding to the attack by the waters. Little more than its gunwale was to be seen, and it was reeling like a drunken man.

The lights of Bloomfield had long before disappeared, and the space around them was getting dark, for a mountain of clouds had risen, and doom hemmed them in.

"Merciful heavens!" suddenly ejacu-

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lated Rodney, as he fell against his companion. "Look! A boat!"

A light had flashed before them as if it had risen from the bay. It was not ten rods away. The steamer was plunging head on, as if driven by demon power. It was coming down upon the boys like a fiery avalanche.

Dick rose to his feet and shouted. His voice only seemed to be drowned in the noise made by the plunging steamer. The light was now full upon them, and both boys rose and waved their coats with the energy of despair. At the same time they shouted with all their might.

"She'll run us down!" goaned Rodney. "We are right in the path of death."

"Heaven help us, then."

The steamer now resembled some black thing that had sprung out of the bay for their undoing. The boys could hear the clanging of its machinery and already felt their end. Once more Dick leaped to his feet and shouted at the top of his voice.

The steamer had no mercy. It was doom personified, and the following second it struck the boat and hurled it into the air. The boys were thrown into the water by the terrible impact.

Dick fell near the little boat as it came down, and seized it with the energy of death itself. The craft was bottom up, and the lower planks had been knocked awry by the bay monster. The boys crawled upon her bottom and gasped. The steamer already was out of sight.

"A breathing spell, that's all," said Rodney, dolefully.

"But we'll make the most of it," was the heroic response.

It was a poor resting-place for the boys. The disabled boat was liable to turn at any moment and end the chapter of life.

"Here's another light!" Dick suddenly exclaimed. "This boat may have some mercy."

But it had none. The wind drove the boys' voices in the wrong direction, and the light vanished in a jiffy.

"What fools we've been!" said Rodney thru set teeth.

Dick made no reply, but his face was white, and he knew that he was losing his hold on the slippery keel.

CHAPTER XII.

IT WAS the next day. All Bloomfield was excited over a remarkable story told by Dick and Rodney to the effect that while they were digging for Captain Kidd's treasure, they had been pounced upon by four masked men, who, after taking the prize from them, forced them into a leaky boat, which was rowed out into the bay, where the man who did the rowing, after scuttling the boat in which the boys lay bound, had escaped, leaving them to their fate.

Dick narrated how, after being run down by one steamer, a second one passed them, while a third boat, which proved to be an incoming fishing smack, rescued them when they had given up all hope, and brought them safely into Bloomfield

"But who got the treasure?" was the usual question.

"I suppose it was carried off by the men who surprised us," Dick replied.

"You should have watched them narrowly."

"We did, but their masks protected their faces."

"And you couldn't see a bit of them?"

"Not an inch."

"It's too bad," was the general comment

Dick was sitting at the supper table when a visitor was announced, and he arose to greet Israel Murdock, the detective.

"This is better than clinging to an upturned boat?" queried Mr. Murdock, smiling

"I should say it is," answered Dick. "What have you discovered?"

"Finish your supper first," answered Murdock. "I want to hear your story again. I'm in no particular hurry. I've sent to New York for a little help, and then I'll proceed to play a little game of my own."

When Dick had finished his repast, he settled back in his chair, and at the sleuth's request told the story of his hunt for the pirate's treasure from the very beginning. He had a very attentive listen .

"I noticed one peculiar thing at the cache," Dick said in conclusion. "One of the men who attacked us limped a little."

"As if he wasn't altogether on his safety pins?"

"Exactly "

"And wasn't one of the others rather smallish-like?"

"I remember now that he was."

Mr. Murdock became reflective.

"It was a well-laid game," he said, when he spoke again. The next instant he looked at his watch.

"My men must be at the rendezvous by this time," he said, rising. "You are going with me, Dick. Remember that I didn't come here to find Captain Kidd's treasure, but to discover who murdered Danny Bimm."

"And you think you've solved the mystery?" cried Dick.

"Let results answer that question."

Sitting in a chair in his office was Noll Shavers, the town constable. He was enjoying a very black pipe, which seemed to afford a great deal of satisfaction. The room was quite dark, for the notice of his absence from town still fluttered on his front door.

"Open the door!" a voice said on the outside.

Mr. Shavers leaned hurriedly to the left and caught up a revolver.

"Open the door in the name of the law!" repeated the same voice.

Shavers was on his feet facing the door in the dark, with the weapon clutched in his right hand. He simply grated his teeth and said nothing. In another instant there was a crash and the door fell inward, while Mr. Shavers was revealed by the light of a dark-lantern. Three revolvers were thrust into his face, and he was commanded to drop the one he held, which he sullenly did.

"Give him the bracelets, Jenkins," said the leader of the unexpected visitors

"Now, Mr. Shavers, you are a prisoner of the law," quietly said Murdock. "And you will deport yourself in such a manner as to give us no trouble."

"What does all this mean?" demanded Shavers, with a quaver in his voice. "What have I done?"

'The query should be, 'What haven't I done?' In short, constable, you are arrested for murder.'

"It is false! I never touched him."

"You will have a chance to prove that later on," answered the detective.

In a few minutes Shavers was being conducted down the street under guard, and the little band halted in front of Jonas Benham's store. Mr. Murdock entered alone. The grocer was caught napping, and when he recognized his cool-headed visitor his face changed color.

"Is this your button, Mr. Benham?" asked the detective, taking from his pocket a black rubber button which he extended.

"Why should it be my button more than another's?" exclaimed Benham.

"There are, I perceive, four buttons on your coat, but one doesn't quite correspond with the others."

"Well, what of that?" snapped the grocer.

"This button was lost at Shelter Cove the night Danny Binn was murdered," said Murdock, calmly. "I had the good fortune to find it there."

Not a word was uttered in response.

"Do you admit it?" suddenly asked Murdock

Slowly the grocer rose to his feet. His face was white and his lips quivered. In one minute he seemed to have aged ten years.

Murdock turned to the door and spoke in a loud voice: "Come in!"

Those outside, his own men, Dick, and Noll Shavers entered the store.

"See," said Murdock, holding out his hand. "The man and the button."

"I told you I never killed old Danny!" cried Shavers. "And I don't intend to hang for something I never did."

Jonas Benham was crushed and helpless in his chair. Guilt was written in every line of his face.

"By this time the other boys have caught Gost Blair," remarked the detective, "and they have orders to bring him here."

. ardly had the words been spoken when three men entered, having under guard Gost Blair, the councilman

"I guess we're thru with this matter for tonight," Murdock resumed, and then he turned to Dick. "Dick, my boy," said he, with a smile. "Captain Kidd's loot is buried not twenty feet from us."

The young treasure hunter started.

"You will find it buried in the north- [illegible]

(Continued on Page 30.)

To the Wife of One Who Drinks

I have an important confidential message for you. It will [illegible] How to conquer the liquor habit [illegible] become happy. Wonderful, safe, lasting, reliable [illegible] method, guaranteed. Write to Edw. J. Woods, [illegible] New York, N. Y. Show this to others

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Classified Want Ad Information

The rate for one insertion in Chicago Ledger and one insertion in The Saturday Blade is 30 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size of ad or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next

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AGENTS 100% PROFIT SELLING A SIM- [illegible] price helps sell it—one sale brings many more! [illegible]

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AGENTS MAKE $50 TO $100 WEEKLY. [illegible] Safety [illegible], Kansas

WANTED MEN AND WOMEN TO INTRO- duce our fine line of popular priced Cof-[illegible] Teas, Baking Powder, Etc. Valuable and [illegible] premiums free. No experience or money [illegible] ary. Exclusive territory. No traveling. We pay well for your services. Employment permanent. Write for our proposition. The Great Eastern Coffee & Tea Co., Care Mr. [illegible]

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The Castle of Lies.

(Continued From Page 4.)

[illegible] its charm. I was not to rest until I had accomplished my uncertain [illegible] That it was by its very nature so incredibly difficult did not daunt me. But how was I to set about it? A life for a life. To save the world a strong and buoyant soul for the strong and buoyant soul that had perished because of my helplessness and weakness. However romantic, it was a tangible enough ideal.

But was I to wander about, like a knight of mediaeval times, seeking to succor one in peril and distress—to rescue beautiful maidens from grim ogres and terrible dragons? I smiled at the absurd resemblance of my uncertain task to theirs.

So far as lay in my power, I would perform my self-imposed task in a direct and businesslike method. As to this method, a dozen extravagant courses of action occurred to me at once. Of the dozen I selected two as possible.

"Every English gentleman comes of a race of warriors," the mysterious woman of the reading-room had said to me last night. Miss Brett, being an English gentlewoman, had the blood of soldiers in her veins. The physical courage of the battlefield, then, must appeal to her. If, for instance, I should enlist in the Foreign Legion, there was the Legion of Honor to be won. The little ribbon would tell its eloquent story.

But Willoughby's life had been lost amid the dread silence of the white snows. I looked long and earnestly where the sun touched the mountaintop with a rosy light out of the morning mists. The mountains seemed to beckon, to wait for me.

I had shuddered—I still shuddered, as I thought of their awful gloom and loneliness. And yet they seemed to beckon—to wait for me. I had been helpless and weak. They had conquered me. Well, I must return to conquer them. Their very immensity need not appal me. Man's glory is to subdue the vast forces of nature—to make them his own.

I thought of the Hospice of St. Bernard. There for centuries men had even laid down their lives to save the [illegible] one of the little band for the time being? Why should I not become a novitiate in the order? A few months of arduous training, and I should be ready for the battle.

If I went to the monastery and told the good father superior of the sacred vow I had made, would he laugh at me for a madman, or would he understand and help me to fulfill it?

I began the day, therefore, vaguely hopeful. I no longer permitted myself to be troubled [illegible] society of my fellowmen. I paid my two francs admission to the kursaal, and listened with real enjoyment to its excellent orchestra.

[illegible] There was a faint but exquisite perfume. I glanced, as did a dozen others, at the woman who was passing.

The small, but superbly poised figure, gowned with a marvelous simplicity, paused by my side a fraction of a second. It was my acquaintance of the reading-room again, and she had murmured a good morning. A dozen had noted the greeting and envied me.

I did not return it. She continued her way daintily, punishing me for my rudeness by smiling across at me mockingly as she seated herself at my right. There was something of a childish, almost fairy malice in the illusive smile.

The intermission came. All the world pushed back their chairs, and made their way thru glazed doors at the rear, whence an electric bell rang persistently. The motley crowd of officers, tourists, and such of the society of Lucerne as was at the kursaal passed thru the glazed doors to play the petits chevaux—a rather harmless form of dissipation, a gambling toy that permits one to lose at the most a five-franc piece.

I mingled with the crowd about the [illegible] imaginary race course. A croupier changed a fifty-franc note for me. I [illegible] time against the field. Again I lost. I [illegible] all my five franc pieces but two.

While I weighed them thoughtfully in my palm, my arm was touched [illegible] reading-room once more. She lifted her eyebrows in whimsical concern at my ill luck.

"Even these little horses, you see, madam, know that I am to be shunned," I said in a low voice.

"My friend," she smiled vivaciously, "they are simply frightened at your black face. They are sensitive, the little horses. But if you coax—we shall see. Allons, we will be prudent, a little shining franc on number twenty-seven. Now, if my brave horses only know that it is I who am asking them to win for us, we shall win."

"Ne rien va plu[illegible]," croaked an official in a dingy dress suit and crumpled shirt bosom. He spun the mechanism briskly between two bony fingers and thumb. The tiny jockeys in blue, buff, green, and red sped swiftly [illegible] the course. Presently they straggled one behind the other, and came to a pause. The croupier stretched out his rake, and drew in our two shining francs with the other winnings of the bank.

I turned to her sternly. "You see?" I cried in tragic dismay.

"Pouf! A little patience, monsieur. [illegible] a five-franc piece, the maximum, on the field. This time we shall certainly win."

Three times in succession we won—now at even odds, now with the odds in

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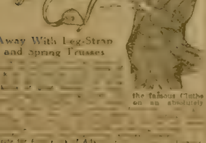
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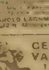

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our favor. But again the electric bell rang. She shrugged her shoulders, and made a grimace of regret.

"Alas! At the hour of our triumph the voice of art clamors."

We returned to the concert-room.

"Is it not strange," she murmured, after a pause in the music, "that one longs so much for what is just beyond one's reach, while other fruit, as sweet, may be plucked for the asking?"

The boldness of the metaphor startled and repelled me.

"You speak in riddles, madam," I said coldly. Frankly, I had not placed her exactly as that sort of a woman.

"Riddles?" She lifted her eyebrows, hesitating. "I mean, Mr. Haddon, that I should be so glad if we might be friends."

I was unconvinced. "You are too generous," I said ironically. "Does your interest in mankind embrace all the world?"

"But you have been unfortunate," she said softly. "Are you angry that I should be sorry for you?"

"I am perplexed, at least."

"If you are only perplexed, I shall not despair." She smiled at me gayly across the table, her elbows supporting the clasped hands that framed her exquisite beauty. "Come, are we to be friends?"

"I remember," I said boldly, "when I was at college, a story of Socrates that pointed an obvious moral. Would you like to hear it?"

She made a mock grimace. "Oh, Socrates, monsieur, and a philosopher! And a philosopher henpecked by his wife Xantippe! Am I one to do with a henpecked philosopher? Regard me seriously, monsieur, and tell me. But if you insist—your story; I shall listen patiently."

"The henpecked philosopher, then," I began somewhat grimly, "tells us that when Hercules had attained manhood he set out on a journey to see the world, and presently came to a parting of two ways. He hesitated as to which way he should choose. While he hesitated there appeared two maidens, each of whom protested that she would lead him the way that he should go. One of these maidens was clad chastely in somber but not unpleasing raiment. 'If, Hercules, you will go my way, you will find it rough and tiresome. There are brambles to impede your progress; [illegible] your sandals. It will always be hazardous, but it will lead to happiness.'"

"Ah, happiness!" sighed the woman opposite me. "She promised much."

"The other maiden was extremely beautiful and her raiment was of silvery tissue. 'My way,' she said softly, taking Hercules gently by the arm, 'is strewn with flowers. It leads, broad and gently sloping, over soft turf, and there is music to gladden the hours. My way leads to pleasure.' The name of the first maiden was Virtue; the name of the other, madam——"

I paused; I was indeed very bold. I looked at my vis-a-vis with some trepidation. I need have felt none. She broke into light laughter, her hands clasped, her eyes sparkling. She leaned demurely toward me; her bright eyes mocked me.

"The name of the other maiden was Vice," she cried in a hollow, lugubrious voice. "My dear gentleman, you are too delicious. Mon Dieu, I should be furious with you! You are telling me quite brutally that your cold Englishwoman—she is Virtue; and I, the very wicked one—I am naughty Vice." And again she laughed deliciously.

"Pardon me, it is you who are applying the moral," I protested awkwardly.

"Then if it is applied not correctly, let us have the true application," she beseeched.

"That must follow the explanation of your extraordinary—dare I say the word?—your extraordinary interest in me."

"Hum!" She leaned back critically. "Shall I say it is because you are handsome?"

"Not if you are honest," I chuckled.

"Or good."

"Why not say brave?" I demanded bitterly.

"Or that you remind me of a dear friend?"

"Say of your late lamented grandmother."

"Or," she flashed, "that it is because you can be of use to me?"

"Ah, that is better!" I assented shortly. "I am to be of use to you, then—and how?"

"Gently, monsieur! First of all, are we to be friends?"

"And again gently," I returned with caution. "Your name, if you are serious?"

A rosy-faced page pushed his way toward us, salver in hand. It was at our table he paused. On the salver was a telegram.

"For me?" cried my companion, eagerly.

The boy nodded, but before he could hand the telegram to her, I had seized it myself. I made a gesture, signifying that I asked her consent to read the name addressed on the envelope. She smiled, but reluctantly, I thought.

"Madam Sophie de Varnier," I read aloud, before I passed the telegram to her.

She tore the envelope open with a jeweled cross that hung from her chatelaine. As she read the message, she became frightfully pale; she swayed in her seat. It was not grief so much as utter despair that prostrated her.

"Dead!" She repeated the word in French more than once in a dazed voice. "Dead, but it is incredible!"

The seconds passed. I did not speak; I regarded her with concern. A beautiful woman is always dangerous, but a beautiful woman in trouble is doubly so. The friendship she had lightly begged of me a moment ago, I was tempted to offer seriously now. She had piqued and fascinated me. Now her unhappiness touched my heart.

The continuation of this highly interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

* * *

The Artful Dodger.

During the trial of a case in a Philadelphia court it became necessary to take the testimony of a curiously reserved witness.

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"I am very well," was the unexpected answer.

"I am not asking as to your health. I want to know what you do."

"I work."

"Where do you work?"

"In a factory."

"What kind of a factory?"

"It is a rather large factory."

"May I venture to inquire what you make in the factory?"

"You want to know what I make in the factory?"

"Precisely. Answer without further circumlocution. Tell me what you make."

"I make ten dollars a week."

* * *

That Was All.

A man was walking along the street, and he saw a house on fire. He rushed across the way and rang the bell. After some time a lady, who proved to be slightly deaf, appeared at the door.

"Madam, your house is on fire."

"What did you say?"

The man began dancing up and down. He pointed above. "I said your house is afire! Flames bursting out! No time to lose!"

"What did you say?"

"House afire! Quick!"

The lady smiled. "Is that all?" she said sweetly.

"Well," replied the man hopelessly, "that's all I can think of just now."

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My Friend Alton.

(Continued From Page 8.)

"Not a thing. It was too bad."

Benny rolled a cigarette with slim fingers and tried to look sorrowful.

"But human life is a sacred thing," I said absently.

"I know it."

"They ought to catch the killer," I continued.

"The killer—yes. But not an innocent man."

"Then you believe in Alton's innocence?" I asked pointedly.

"Whose?" Benny's voice was all amazement.

"Alton Rodger's innocence," I repeated. "Do you believe in it?"

"What has he got to do with it?"

"Don't beat around the bush, Benny. You understand me."

Benny's eyes twinkled.

"I guess I can trust you," he said, without even looking in my direction. "But first let's have breakfast. I can't talk on an empty stomach; it goes wrong somehow."

"Very well," said I. "And if I am not mistaken here comes our meal."

Benny stripped the stand and put it near the bed and arranged the chairs beside it. Presently the worthy Fields came up with our breakfast on a tray. When he had gone and we had begun eating, I started a rapid fire of questions.

"Who do you think killed Jones last night?" I began by way of opener.

Benny shook his head. "That's hard to tell. I only know Al Rodgers didn't do it."

"But you surely have suspicions."

"Of course, but I don't know anything to prove them with."

"What fellows around here were at outs with Jones?"

"Lots of people had a grudge at him; I don't think he had particular enemies any more than he had particular friends."

I leaned across the table.

"See here, Benny, there had to be some reason for this killing. A man, no matter how low he is, never shoots a fellow creature just to see him fall; you know that. Now what was the killer's motive?"

Benny blinked.

"One motive might be to keep him still," I continued. "What about it?"

"Listen," said my companion. "Jones testified at the inquest held over Carlson's body that Al Rodgers had sworn to get Carlson fair or foul. If Jones would be present when the time comes to try Alton for that killing, things would look bad for our friend."

"Do you think he killed Carlson?" I demanded.

"No, I know he didn't."

"How do you know it?"

"Because Carlson was shot in the back," said Benny, simply.

"Have you ever talked to Alton about the matter?"

"No, not to speak of; he won't say anything."

"That speaks bad for him."

"Yes—or very good for him," retorted Benny. "You claim to know Al. You should think better of him than that."

"What do you think of him?" I asked.

"Listen. A big tinhorn picked onto me one night over at the saloon. I was a stranger here with no one to back me up. The tinhorn would have killed me but for Alton. A month later I got mighty sick—no hope, the doctor said. Al took me out to his place and I got well. In those weeks I came to know Al Rodgers as does no other man. I tell you all those charges against him are false. He didn't kill Carlson; he didn't kill Jones. Who did I can't say, but remember this—it wasn't Al."

"Another thing," I said. "Why should he use invisible ink?"

"How did you know?" asked Benny.

"He left a letter for me last evening before he went away," and I told Benny my experience at the livery barn.

"Who sent you there?" asked Benny.

"The agent at the depot. He said I would be likely to find out if Alton had left town by inquiring there."

"I see. You are sure the letter had been opened."

"Absolutely certain."

"It's a pity you didn't keep it. However, it can't be helped now."

"No," I agreed, "but I would like to know who the guilty man was."

"As well as other things that aren't plain," remarked Benny.

"You haven't explained about the invisible ink," I reminded him.

"I don't know much about it myself, only that Al told me to be always careful to heat every letter I got from him, as there might be an important message some time that he wanted me to know."

"Has he ever used this method."

"Once."

"And that was——"

"About five days ago. He asked me to keep the blind down in my room over the saloon every time the sheriff was in town."

"I should think a letter would be safe enough without this secret business."

"It would if you had delivery and good mail service. Out here a person has to trust his mail to some pretty tough customers. Understand?"

"I see. And now, one other thing: "Why doesn't the sheriff get Alton?"

"The sheriff thinks about this like I do; of course, if he runs right into Al he is going to have to use his warrant. But between you and me, he isn't looking for him very strong."

"Then Al has lots of friends here?"

"You bet! A good many among the ranchers, but very few in town."

"And lots of enemies?"

"The nesters hate him; that is, the most of them."

"Why?"

"Alton is the first man that ever choked down on them. You see it's like this. Al's ranch is back there in a big basin among the hills. Above and below him are bunches of nesters. The fellow that owned the ranch before Al got it was run out by those fellows. They stole his cattle and his horses till the poor devil nearly went crazy. Al came in and bought the place at a bargain; the nesters commenced on him. And Al came back at them and made them be good. As a result they hate him. Of course, there are some good people among the little landowners, but they look on the cattleman as a natural enemy and act toward him as such. One man in particular who had trouble with Al was George Whitman."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"Sort of a king among the nesters, and he rules them with a high hand. He planned most of the devilment against Al, and if the rest were like him they would make it stick, too."

"And he is still an enemy of Al's?"

"I should say. Whitman has the nesters aroused. I pity Alton if he falls into their hands."

"He is awake to the danger, I suppose?"

"You bet!" Benny was emphatic. "He will stay clear of them now."

"What made him go to the saloon last evening?"

"I don't know."

"How can we help him out of this fix?"

"Find the man that got away with Carlson, and Jones. I'm doing the best I can here in town. By keeping my ears open I ought to get hold of some clew or other. However, you wouldn't be much good at that. These people are shy of strangers. Fact is, I can't see how you can help much. Besides, you are supposed to be suffering from that rap you got last evening. You don't want to appear too spry all at once or some nester will get suspicious. If I were you I'd stay in this room today, at least."

"But this lonesome hole," I protested. "A fellow can't stay here——"

"Improve your mind. Think over the question and find a way out for Alton. I'll be up to see you this afternoon. Maybe if you're real good you can come out and walk the streets then. I had better be getting down to the saloon. I might be missing something this very minute. So long," and Benny nodded genially and departed down the creaking stairs.

Left alone, the morning passed very slowly. I dug a book out of a trunk and tried to pass the time reading, but the adventure of the printed page seemed very tame and far away compared to this mystery before my eyes, and the story remained unread while I pondered over the things Benny had told me.

And which, after all, wasn't so much. I was surprised when, after mentally going over the conversation, I saw that I was no nearer the mystery than I had been before. Could it be that the bright-eyed Benny was merely playing with me? That he was holding back something? I decided that, at the first opportunity, I would question some one concerning Benny's relations with Alton Rodgers. If I could obtain a chance to talk with the latter I felt sure I should know all that he knew. In the old days we had been very good friends.

Alton had been my chum thru college and my pardner thru a year of indifferent success in a law office. Then Al had gone West, on account of his health, which was failing from the indoor life. With a small inheritance he bought the Circle C, and began again in the new country. Altho his cheery letters did not complain, I knew things were not going very smoothly for him. Five years passed before he wrote that he was out of debt and on a firm footing, and that I must come and see him.

He had come East several times on business; I had not noticed any great change in him except that he was stronger and healthier than before. Trouble with his neighbors had not been mentioned, and I knew nothing of it until enlightened by the barkeeper.

The glorious spring decided me. I wrote him I would come to spend a month, and I closed the law office and took the train. And so I came suddenly out of the old homely routine and into a different order of things, out of the commonplace into the mysterious.

As I sat there pondering dreamily with the neglected book on my knees, I was startled out of a realm of dim imaginings into the wide-awake world of reality by the sound of running in the street. These steps crossed the porch of the hotel hurriedly, and came rapidly up the stairs. The door flew open and Benny, haggard, was before me. I started to my feet.

"What the——" I began.

"They got Alton," he said. "The nesters——"

"Got him!" I cried. "You mean——"

"No, he is not dead; but it is only a question of time until the job is done."

"How did it happen, Benny?"

"The big bunch of nesters come onto him asleep in a grove of trees in the basin below Whitman's. They would have hung him right then and there, but the sheriff, suspecting something, left his little party and followed the other fellows. He come up just in time, and talked them out of it, and brought Al into town."

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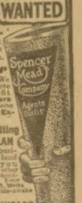

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Have you been wishing for an automobile? If so, here is your opportunity to earn one in your spare time. The Missouri Valley Farmer is going to give away on March 25th, 1916, a new 1916 model Overland Touring Car as first prize, a Ford Touring Car as second prize, and a $250 Motorcycle as third prize, besides twenty-seven other valuable rewards. Any man, woman, boy, or girl is eligible to compete for these prizes. All you have to do is to take subscriptions to our paper. The subscription price of Missouri Valley Farmer is 25c a year, 50c for three years, or $1.00 for six years. Each yearly subscription counts 500 points, each three-year subscription 2,000 points, and each six-year subscription, 4,000 points. During the first part of the contest, or until February 26th, a special offer of double points will be in effect. In other words all subscriptions sent in between now and February 26th will count just twice as many points as our regular point scale. This is the largest number of points that will be allowed during the contest. In case of a tie for any of the prizes a prize exactly like the one tied for will be awarded to each contestant so tied.

Forty-Six Others Have Won Autos!

During the past three or four years we have given away 46 automobiles. These cars have ranged in price from $400 to $1,800. We are making this contest one of the most liberal we have ever conducted, giving two automobiles instead of one, and thus doubling the chances of the contestants to win an automobile. We will gladly furnish you with the names of our past winners so that you can investigate our contests if you wish to do so. Surely you can do as well as these past winners. No experience is necessary. Just a little perseverance is all that is required. Don't you think a prize as valuable as an Overland or a Ford automobile is worth a little effort in your spare time in taking subscriptions to our paper?

SURPRISE PACKAGE FREE

MAIL THE COUPON below with your name and address, and we will send you full information and our booklet entitled "Auto Dreams," which contains illustrations and descriptions of the automobiles and testimonial letters from our past winners. We will also give you a valuable Surprise Package Free. We are not going to tell you what it is for we want to surprise you. The signing of the coupon does not obligate you in any way. If you want an automobile, don't delay but mail the coupon right now—today. It's absolutely free.

MISSOURI VALLEY FARMER, 809 Jackson St., Topeka, Kansas

MISSOURI VALLEY FARMER, 809 Jackson St., Topeka, Kansas.

Gentlemen—Please send me full information about your auto contest and send surprise package free. The signing of this coupon does not obligate me in any way.

Name ....

Town ....

State.................................R. F. D.....................Box..............

THE FAIRY CORNER

MAMMA'S VALENTINE

"It's mos' like Christmas, isn't it, mamma?" asked little Dorothy as she sat on the edge of her dainty white bed while her mother pulled off the tiny shoes and stockings. "Mos' just as 'citin' an'—an' creepy!" added Dorothy, her eyes as wide awake with excitement as tho indeed it were Christmas Eve, with Santa Claus coming some time in the night to leave her beautiful presents.

Mamma laughed and patted Dorothy on her little blond head.

"Indeed it is," she said. "But you must go to sleep—it is way past your bedtime now."

"'Spose nobody sent me a valentine tomorrow!" cried Dorothy suddenly, her little heart almost stopping still at the awful thought.

Mamma smiled again.

"That would be terrible, wouldn't it, dear?" she consoled. "But I don't think you need worry—some one will remember you, I'm sure. Come now, time for bed and—oh, I nearly forgot, didn't I, to tell you your sleepy-time story? Well"—and here mamma stopped and thought a while—"well, suppose I tell you about a valentine I received once when I was a little girl not very much older than you are now."

"Oh, goody-goody!" cried Dorothy, tucking her little pink toes under the cover and propping up her chin with her tiny hand.

"It was a most wonderful valentine," said mamma, "quite different from the kind you will get tomorrow. Why, my dear, if any one sent you one like it, you wouldn't think it a valentine at all! In those days we did not have the pretty lace-paper ones like you see now. Ours were all home-made—usually just pieces of red card-board, cut heart-shaped and with little verses written on them.

"But mine was—think of it, Dorothy—mine was an ear of red corn! Always on St. Valentine's Day in the evening we had a big husking bee in the barn and all the young men and women came from miles around.

"Then, everybody husked corn in the barn, and after that they danced and had good things to eat. In picking up the ears to husk them every young woman watched for an ear that had turned red, for then all the young men had a right to catch her and kiss her. And such a running and dodging and screaming and laughing as there was when one of the young ladies was found with a red ear in her hands!

"Of course I was just a little girl then. But my mamma and papa used to let us children stay up until bedtime and watch the older people husk the corn. Generally, too, we had several little boys and girls in to keep us company. We always took part in the husking, and tried to act just like the grown-ups did.

"Well, one St. Valentine's evening I was husking away for dear life with the others, laughing and calling out to my little playmates, when—all of a sudden—I looked down and saw that I held in my hand one of the coveted red ears. Whew! My heart seemed to jump right up in my throat! I didn't know what to do—whether to hold it up and shout, 'I've found one!' or to hide it away quick, so no one would see it. For a moment I hesitated, and then decided to hide it. But just as I stooped over to do so, a little boy grabbed me around the shoulders and yelled: 'Look! She's got it! She's got it! Give her a kiss! Give her a kiss!'

"And he tried to, too, but I pushed him off and started to run. And then—what do you think happened? Why, all the little boys and the young men—the real, old grown-up ones, too, mind you—started after me. My mamma and the rest of the young ladies called to me to run, and laughed and helped me dodge the men and the boys chasing me. Oh, it was so exciting! But presently I lost my breath and became so tired that I just couldn't take another step.

"And just as I was falling down that same little boy grabbed me by the hair. 'I've got her! I've got her!' he yelled. Oh, he almost pulled my hair out! And he kissed me, too, right on the cheek. Then all the men crowded round, and one of them picked me up and held me way up high on his shoulder, and everybody joined hands and danced round me in a big circle. Oh, it was such fun!

"And mamma gave me a big piece of cake—before any one else was allowed to have a single thing to eat! I felt so proud—oh, so proud and happy!"

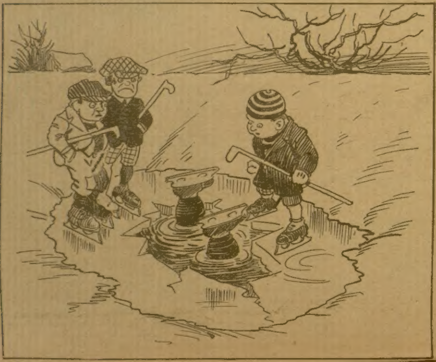
"An' did the little boy have any cake?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," answered mamma, with a smile. "I gave him a piece of mine to eat and—that little boy is your papa, now, Dorothy."

"O-o-o-o!" said Dorothy, her eyes even wider apart than they were at first. "My really, truly papa? O-o-o-o! And he was once a little boy, just like I'm a little girl, wasn't he?"

"Yes," said mamma, "and a very mischievous little boy, too!"

* * *



Skinny Smith—Hang it! Fatty Jones is always doing something to break up our hockey games!"

Captain Kidd's Treasure

(Continued From Page 25.)

this time there will be no boat ride after you have brought it to light. As I have said, I want the men who killed Danny Bimm, and having accomplished my object, I turn the loot over to you, with Israel Murdock's compliments."

That night the fever of excitement in Bloomfield rose high. The arrests were followed by the apprehension of Bosty Shavers, who was charged with being one of the party which surprised Dick and Rodney at Captain Kidd's cache, and he readily admitted his guilt.

"Do you know," said Alice Gray to Dick, "I always suspected Jonas Benham of being connected with that terrible crime, for I saw him come home that night all begrimed with yellow mud, and there is such mud only at Shelter Cove. And when he brought me his coat and asked me to sew on a button which didn't match with the rest, I was sure something was wrong."

"I really would never have charged him with the crime, tho I knew he was crazy to get hold of the long-lost treasure."

"How much does the treasure amount to?" asked the girl.

"The gold coins amount to fifty thousand dollars and the jewels to as much more."

"What a prize the old chest was!"

"A great prize, and I can't get Murdock to accept a doubloon. He says he wasn't looking for it. He was on the Danny Bimm trail, and is perfectly satisfied."

"Well, I must say he is a strange man," commented the girl. "I feel sorry for Jonas Benham. It was a case of bad company, after all."

"Bad company and avarice," returned Dick.

When they came to try the grocer for murder, it was discovered that he could not appear at a bar of earthly justice, for he had slipped from life by his own hands, thus by a single act proving his guilt.

Noll Shavers and Gost Blair received life sentences, while Bosty was sent for a long term to the House of Correction, where he promised to mend his evil ways.

Long after Dick and Alice had settled down for life in a handsome home of their own, and Rodney had put his share of the treasure to good use, the Long Islanders talked about the Shelter Cove tragedy, and no one ever afterward hunted for Captain Kidd's treasure.

In next week's Ledger will appear another rattling story of the Michigan lumber region by Milford Merrill, author of "Riding the Logs," etc. The new story will be entitled, "Glenn, the Boy Pilot; or, Rafting on the Muskalong." Readers will find it full of perils and thrilling happenings. Don't miss reading it.

The End.

* * *

Laughed at Last.

There is a judge in a certain Eastern city noted for his grouch. The comical incident has no more effect on his frown than upon a wooden Indian. But one day a lawyer, who had tried in vain to make the judge laugh, walked into court and found the jurist doubled up with mirth. The lawyer hurried to his colleagues to find the reason.

"Dinner to the man responsible for that," he said. "Who told the story?"

Another lawyer drew a sheet of paper toward him and wrote the words. "The judge."

Learn to Play the Piano In One Evening

If you don't play the piano or organ and want to learn, won't you let us loan you for five days 100 pieces of the world's sweetest music and full instructions for playing?

Old Style Way
Same Music Written In
"Easy Form" Way
Right Hand B--A-G G-E-C-- D--C-B E-C-C--
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Example: When the music says "B D G" just strike the keys marked "B D G." You can't go wrong.

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A postal card brings it to you FREE.

Would you give a penny to learn to play the piano or organ in one evening? Impossible! No, not at all. Hundreds of thousands of others who never played before, played their first piece in just a few minutes. THEN WHY CAN'T YOU?

"My boy, who could never play a note, sat down and played three pieces first night."—Mrs. E. Windover, Halls Bridge, Ont.

"I never could learn anything about music until I got 'Easy Form.' I learned to play a piece and carry the four parts in an hour." Amanda West, Scottsboro, Ala.

On request we will send you thousands of similar letters from almost every part of the world.

Doesn't this convince you that you can play by this wonderful new method?

Any child or old person can now understand and play the Piano or Organ without previous knowledge. No teacher. No tedious instructions by mail. Simply write us a post card, saying, "Please send me Easy Form Music for 5 days' free trial. If I don't want to purchase it, I will return it promptly." Be sure to answer these questions:

How many white keys on your piano or organ? Do you play note music?

We will then send you complete instructions, together with 100 of the world's most beautiful pieces of music. If you find you can play at once, send us $1.50 in 5 days after you receive the music, and $1.00 a month until $6.50 in all is paid. If you are not delighted with the music, mail it to us in 5 days and owe us nothing. Isn't that fair enough?

Address—EASY METHOD MUSIC CO., 89 Clarkson Bldg., Chicago.

GOITRE

$2.50 TEST TREATMENT FREE

This coupon and 10c in stamps or silver to help pay packing and mailing charges, is good for one $2.50 Test Treatment FREE by mail in plain package.

Age? ____ How old is Goitre? ____ yrs.
Nervous? ____ Hands tremble? ____
Do eyes bulge? ____ Does heart beat too rapidly? ____
Health? ____ 912
Name ____
Address ____

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The suffering and disfigurements of Goitre are no longer necessary. My simple Home Treatment is relieving hundreds of old chronic cases that had resisted all other remedies. Grateful patients are constantly writing letters like this from Mrs. C. W. Hahn, of North Jackson, O.: "My Goitre is cured—neck normal, and am feeling fine. I improved before I had taken the medicine a week. You have a wonderful remedy." My treatment quickly stops choking, shortness of breath, and other trying symptoms. Does not interfere with regular duties. No danger. Complete $2.50 Test Treatment mailed in plain package to anyone afflicted with Goitre. Send coupon TODAY, and test Treatment AT MY EXPENSE. No obligation.

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ARE YOU TIMID OR SELF-CONSCIOUS?

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If I Send You this Suit

made to your measure, in the latest style, loose box back, would you be willing to keep and wear it, show it to your friends and let them see our beautiful samples and dashing new styles.

Could you use $5.00 a day for a little spare time? Perhaps I can offer you a steady job. If you will write me a letter or a postal card at once and say *"Send me your special offer,"* I will send you samples and styles to pick from and my *surprising liberal Offer.*

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BANNER TAILORING CO.
Dept. 274 CHICAGO

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I offer a genuine guaranteed remedy for tobacco or snuff habit. It is mild, pleasant, strengthening. For either sex. Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco or snuff. Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures the health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas, belching, gnawing or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach; constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, heart failure, lung trouble, melancholy, neurasthenia, impaired memory and will-power, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver, loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders. Nervous breakdown, weakened intellect and INSANITY are often attributed to tobacco habit by eminent medical men. Why continue to commit suicide when you can live a really contented life if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid yourself of habit by suddenly stopping with will-power—don't do it. Correct method is to eliminate the nicotine poison from system, strengthen the weakened, irritated membranes and nerves and genuinely overcome the craving. Would you like to quickly and easily quit tobacco and enjoy yourself a thousand times better while feeling always in robust health? My FREE book tells all about the wonderful 3 days Method. Inexpensive, reliable. Also Secret Method for conquering habit in another without his knowledge. Full particulars including my Book on Tobacco & Snuff Habit mailed in plain wrapper free. Address

EDWARD J. WOODS, 1496 B. Station E, New York, N. Y.

Ledger's Embroidery Corner

We call the attention of every woman to the beauty of the patterns displayed from week to week, and wish to impress upon each one the splendid quality of material that makes our offer a great bargain in every case. Every offer is complete. You can finish it up without buying anything extra.

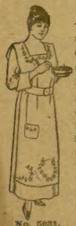
These designs are already stamped on the best quality cloth, and every set comes to you complete, exactly as described.

You are sure to find many articles that you want if you watch the Ledger each week, and it is so easy to get them. Any person can earn one or all of the designs shown by sending us the amount of subscriptions to either the Chicago Ledger or Saturday Blade, required in the description under each article.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

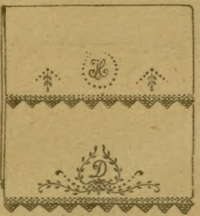
Either the Chicago Ledger or Saturday Blade $1.00 a year each; 6 months for 50 cents.

The Blade and Ledger together $1.50 a year (52 issues); 6 months for 75 cents; 4 months 50 cents.



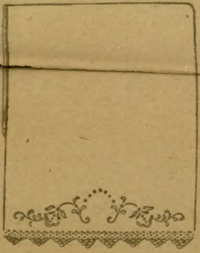
No. 5031, Fudge Apron.

NO. 5031, FUDGE APRON—During the cold winter months, when parties and entertainments are some of social features in every home, the young lady or girl will have many an occasion for the use of a fudge apron. This apron is ¾ length, slip-over, stamped on good quality National white crash and we include 3 skeins of floss for working the design. Given for $1.50 in subscriptions to the Blade or Ledger.



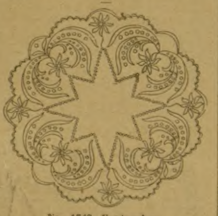
No 5032, Guest Towels.

NO. 5032, GUEST TOWELS—Crocheted and embroidered towels are most popular and fashionable at the present time, and undoubtedly will continue so for several years to come. The two towels shown here are of serviceable grade huck toweling, each measures 14x24 inches, and [illegible] very simple design. With each set we supply you with one set of initial transfers (four different styles), one ball of fast color, blue crocheting cotton; three crochet needles, and four skeins of white floss for embroidering the designs. This complete outfit given for $2.00 in subscriptions, new or renewal, to either the Blade or Ledger.



No. 5033, Bath Towel.

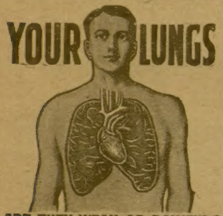
NO. 5033, BATH TOWEL—Nothing is prettier than a fancy embroidered and crocheted bath towel. The design is stamped on a superior quality of absorbent crash, better than Turkish toweling, and it measures 18x38 inches. With each stamped towel we include two skeins of white floss for embroidering; one ball of fast color blue crocheting cotton; three crochet needles, and one set of initial transfers (four different styles). This complete set will be sent for $2.00 in subscriptions, new or renewal, to The Saturday Blade or Chicago Ledger.



No. 1742, Centerpiece.

NO. 1742, CENTERPIECE—Stamped on real white Irish linen, size 18x18 inches, including four skeins of cotton floss. Given for $1 in subscriptions.

Same design stamped on real white Irish linen, size 36x36 inches, including six skeins of cotton floss. Given with a year's subscription to the Blade and the Ledger for $1.50.



ARE THEY WEAK OR PAINFUL?

Do your lungs ever bleed?
Do you have night sweats?
Have you pains in chest and sides?
Do you spit yellow and black matter?
Are you continually hawking and coughing?
Do you have pains under your shoulder blades?

These Are Regarded Symptoms of
LUNG TROUBLE

You should take immediate steps to check the progress of these symptoms. The longer you allow them to advance and develop, the more deep seated and serious your condition becomes.

We Stand Ready to Prove to You absolutely, that Lung Germine, the German Treatment, has cured completely and permanently case after case of incipient Lung Disease, Chronic Bronchitis, Catarrh of the Lungs, Catarrh of the Bronchial Tubes and other serious lung troubles. Many sufferers who said they had lost all hope and had been given up by physicians, declare they have been permanently cured by Lung Germine. If your cough and other symptoms are due to weak lungs, serious developments may follow neglect. NOW is the time to begin on LUNG GERMINE and build up and strengthen your lungs. Lung Germine has cured incipient Lung Diseases according to statements of sufferers themselves as well as statements from their doctors—and the patients remain strong and in splendid health today.

Let us send You the Proof—Proof that will Convince any Judge or Jury on Earth

We will gladly send you the proof of many remarkable cures, also a TRIAL package of Lung Germine, together with our new 40 page book (in colors) on the treatment and care of weak lungs and incipient lung disease, if you will send your name and 10 cents (stamps or silver) to help cover expense.

Lung Germine Co., 518 Rae Blk., Jackson, Mich.

Diplomacy.

The Shah once asked a group of his courtiers whom they thought the greater man, himself or his father? At first he could get no reply to so dangerous a question, the answer to which might cost the courtiers their heads. At last a wily old courtier said:

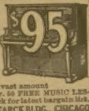
"Your father, sire; for altho you are equal to your father in all other respects, in this he is superior to you—that he had a greater son than any you have."

* * *

A Question.

"Are you going to the musicale at the Robinson's tonight?"

"I don't know. Are they going to have music, or is Josephine going to sing?"



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Many splendid bargains in all standard makes of pianos, including Steinway, Knabe, Emerson, Kimball and others from $45 up to $195. Also second-hand player-pianos from $195 to $385. No money down. 30 days' free trial. Lowest payments.

Big Piano Book Free containing beautiful illustrations of new Starck Pianos and a vast amount of piano information. Send today. 50 FREE MUSIC LESSONS with every piano. Write quick for latest bargain list.

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23 RUBY JEWEL $35 GOLD WATCH

Here is the watch you have always wanted. Sent you at our risk and expense. Send no money, not even a deposit. Write if you prefer open face or hunting case, ladies or gents watch and we will send C. O. D. to your P.O. or for free examination and test to your Express office; this beautifully engraved 1916 THIN MODEL 25-YEAR GUARANTEED AMERICAN MADE WATCH. If you are satisfied with it and are sure it equals a $35 gold watch, pay us only $3.50 and the watch is yours.

DREXEL JEWELRY CO., Dept. 122 Chicago

Spectacles ON TRIAL Free

Don't Send Me One Cent

I Am Going To Send You FREE 3 Pairs of Spectacles

I am putting on the market a large-eye, cable-temple spectacle, the frame of which is made of composition non-gold metal that looks like gold, although there is not one cent's worth of gold in them. The hooks that go around the ears are made of soft twisted cable wire (just exactly like the high-priced spectacles now on the market), which will not hurt the most tender ears. I want you to send for these large-eye, cable-temple, non-gold spectacles of mine.

As soon as you get them I want you to put the first pair on your eyes—the reading and sewing spectacles—sit down in front of the open hearth one of these cold wintry nights, and you'll be agreeably surprised to discover that you can again read the very finest print in your bible, thread the smallest-eyed needle and do the finest kind of embroidery and crocheting with them on, and do it all night long without any headaches or eye-pains, and with as much ease and comfort as you ever did in your life.

THEY'LL ENABLE YOU TO READ THE FINEST PRINT AND SHOOT A BIRD OFF THE TALLEST TREE—

If you like to go out hunting occasionally, put on the second pair—the distance and shooting spectacles—shoulder your gun and go out into the woods some bright and early morning, and you'll be greatly delighted to find that they help you wonderfully in sighting your gun and taking aim at your game. And in the evening, when the shadows are gathering in the dusk, you'll easily be able to distinguish a horse from a cow out in the pasture at the greatest distance and as far as your eye can reach with them on, and this even if your eyes are so very weak that you cannot even read the largest headlines in this paper.

But the third pair—the protection pair of spectacles—is the best of them all. With this pair of protection spectacles on your eyes you will be able to work around in your kitchen and do your cooking in front of a red-hot stove, go out into the field and do your plowing, or go out driving when the snow is on the ground, and they will prevent you from contracting those eye troubles usually caused by heat, dust, grit and dirt, and keep your eyes in good condition while doing your work.

Now Don't Take My Word For It

I am going to send these three pairs of spectacles home to you at once, all charges prepaid, so that you can try them out yourself for reading, sewing, hunting, driving, indoors, outdoors, anywhere, everywhere, and anyway.

Can you get a squarer deal than this anywhere?

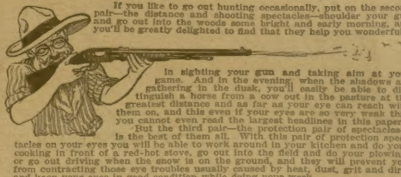
Did you ever hear of a fairer or squarer proposition in which you are offered FREE 3 pairs of large-eye, cable-temple spectacles to fit the whole family to try in your own home for fully ten days without a cent in advance or even a reference?

Just fill in the below coupon and send it in at once without a cent of money. Do this right now before you forget it.

ST. LOUIS SPECTACLE HOUSE, Room 33 ST. LOUIS, MO.

Please mail me, all charges prepaid, a complete family set of three pairs of reading, shooting and protection spectacles on 10 days' free trial, and if I find that I can read, sew, hunt and look away off in the distance with them just as well as I ever did in my life, then and then only will I pay you $1.00 for the whole family set of 3 pairs. It is, however, positively and distinctly understood that if, after 10 days' free trial I don't like them for any reason whatsoever (and I am to be the sole judge), I will return them to you and will not owe you one single, solitary cent, as you have agreed to let me try them fully 10 days without one cent of pay, and I am certainly going to make you stick to that promise.

How old are you?........How many years have you used spectacles?........
If you want any of these three pairs of spectacles to fit any other members of your family, give their ages on this line..................................
Name ....
Post Office..
R. R. No..............Box No..............State...........................



"I Will Trust You Gladly"

"I believe in everyone who works for a living. They are the real home lovers. I want their friendship. They are often the men and women who haven't a whole lot of money to spare all at once to pay for new things. I have many such friends. I want to be your friend. *Write to me* for my bargain book and I will explain to you how I will gladly trust you and how I will open your charge account as soon as I hear from you." (Signed)

Spear
of Pittsburgh

Here Is My 1916 Catalog

—Yours for the Asking

"I want you to see my new Catalog of 1916 bargains. I will send it to you, free, if you will mail me your address or send the coupon below. I have eight large, busy warehouses and stores, all filled with new household goods, ready for your selection.

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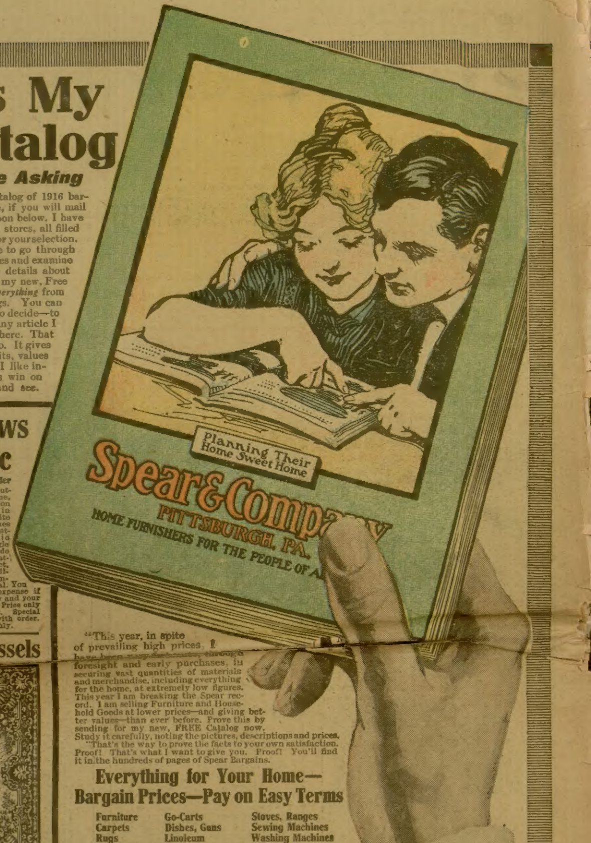
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Bed, Spring, Mattress, Pillows

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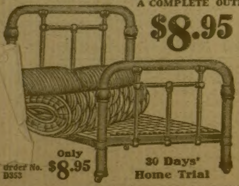

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30 Days' Home Trial

This attractive full size Complete Metal Bed Outfit consists of a handsome, perfectly constructed Iron Bed, which may be had in blue, green, or plain white enamel. Size 4 feet 6 inches wide; a very durable, rustproof steel link fabric spring with heavy angle steel frame; a well made 50 pound cotton top mattress; and a pair of select, well covered feather pillows. We will ship the complete outfit on 30 days' trial. You may return it at our expense if you find it unsatisfactory and your money will be refunded. Price only $8.95 on complete outfit. Special introductory terms, 50c with order. Balance payable 50c monthly.

A Remarkably Beautiful Tapestry Brussels Room Rug $11.45

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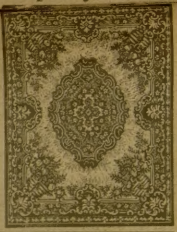
Size 9 x 12 feet



It is difficult to describe in such a small space the merits of this new Tapestry Brussels Rug. It is full 9 x 12 feet in size. The face is made of serviceable wool carpet yarn, closely woven and in an unusually striking pattern. The urns in the corners are of old gold, holding rich dark red roses. The neat medallion center is a wreath of shaded roses and green leaves and the intervening field is a striking French gray shade overlaid with autumn colors. The rich greens and old gold in the outer border help to make the rug most attractive. Our price of $11.45 is exceptionally low and we will ship the rug to you on 30 days' home trial. If it does not please you, send it back at our expense and we will refund your first payment and any money that you have paid for freight.

Order No. D4795. Price, $11.45. Special Introductory terms, 50c cash with order; balance payable 50c monthly.

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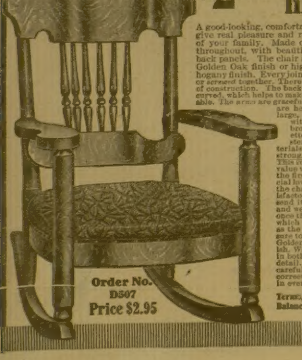

Order No. D507
Price $2.95

A good-looking, comfortable rocker that will give real pleasure and rest to every member of your family. Made of genuine solid oak throughout, with beautifully quarter-sawed back panels. The chair is supplied in either Golden Oak finish or highly glossed rich Mahogany finish. Every joint is carefully *mortised* or *screwed* together. There is no stronger method of construction. The back is high, wide and well curved, which helps to make the chair so comfortable. The arms are gracefully curved and the legs are heavy and strong. The large, roomy seat is covered with exceptionally good brown Spanish Leatherette and carefully upholstered over durable materials and supported by strong, spiral, steel springs. This rocker is a regular $5.00 value which we here offer for the first time at the very special low price of only $2.95. If the chair is not entirely satisfactory when it reaches you, send it back at our expense and we will refund to you at once the first payment of 50c which you have made, as well as the freight you paid. Be sure to state if you want the Golden Oak or Mahogany finish. We guarantee the rocker in both finishes and in every detail. Study the picture carefully. It is an absolutely correct likeness of the chair in every detail.

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